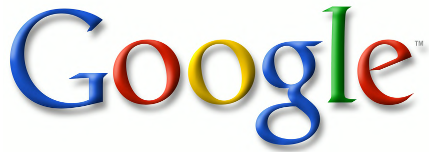

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A COLLEGE FETICH.

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, JR.

New Edition,

WITH SUPPLEMENTARY MATTER.

UNIVERSITY PRESS: JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

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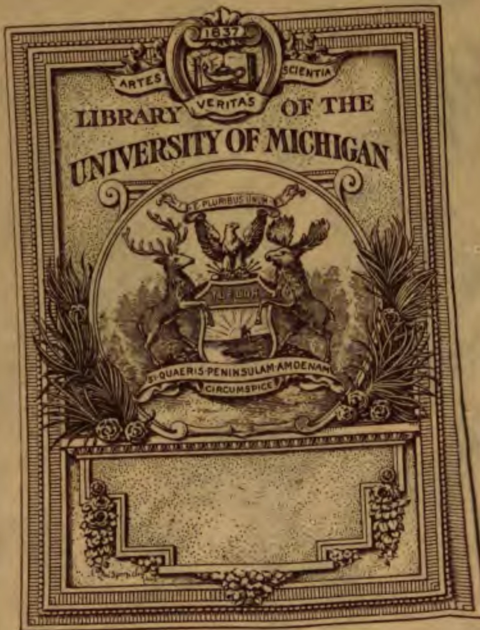

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A COLLEGE FETICH.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

The Harvard Chapter

OF THE

FRATERNITY OF THE PHI BETA KAPPA,

IN SANDERS THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE,

JUNE 28, 1883.

BY CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, JR.

Third Edition,

WITH SUPPLEMENTARY MATTER.

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ADDRESS.

I AM here to-day for a purpose. After no little hesitation I accepted the invitation to address your Society, simply because I had something which I much wanted to say; and this seemed to me the best possible place, and this the most appropriate occasion, for saying it. My message, if such I may venture to call it, is in nowise sensational. On the contrary, it partakes, I fear, rather of the commonplace. Such being the case, I shall give it the most direct utterance of which I am capable.

It is twenty-seven years since the class of which I was a member was graduated from this college. To-day I have come back here to take, for the first time, an active part of any prominence in the exercises of its Commencement week. I have come back, as what we are pleased to term an educated man, to speak to educated men; a literary man, as literary men go, I have undertaken to address a literary society; a man who has, in any event, led an active, changeable, bustling life, I am to say what I have to say to men, not all of whom have led similar lives. It is easy to imagine one who had contended in the classic games returning, after they were over, to the gymnasium in which he had been trained. It would not greatly matter whether he had acquitted himself well or ill in the arena, — whether he had come back crowned with vic-

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tory or broken by defeat: in the full light of his experience of the struggle, he would be disposed to look over the old paraphernalia, and recall the familiar exercises, passing judgment upon them. Tested by hard, actual results, was the theory of his training correct; were the appliances of the gymnasium good; did what he got there contribute to his victory, or had it led to his defeat? Taken altogether, was he strengthened, or had he been emasculated by his gymnasium course? The college was our gymnasium. It is now the gymnasium of our children. Thirty years after graduation a man has either won or lost the game. Winner or loser, looking back through the medium of that thirty years of hard experience, how do we see the college now?

It would be strange, indeed, if from this point of view we regarded it, its theories and its methods, with either unmixed approval or unmixed condemnation. I cannot deny that the Cambridge of the sixth decennium of the century, as Thackeray would have phrased it, was in many respects a pleasant place. There were good things about it. By the student who understood himself, and knew what he wanted, much might here be learned; while for most of us the requirements were not excessive. We of the average majority did not understand ourselves, or know what we wanted: the average man of the majority rarely does. And so for us the college course, instead of being a time of preparation for the hard work of life, was a pleasant sort of vacation rather, before that work began. We so regarded it. I should be very sorry not to have enjoyed that vacation. I am glad that I came here, and glad that I took my degree. But as a training-place for youth to enable them to engage to advantage in the struggle of life, — to fit them to hold their own in it, and to carry off the prizes, — I must in all honesty say, that, looking back through the years, and recalling the requirements and methods of the ancient institution, I am unable to speak of it with all the respect I could wish. Such training as I got, useful for the

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struggle, I got after, instead of before graduation, and it came hard; while I never have been able — and now, no matter how long I may live, I never shall be able — to overcome some great disadvantages which the superstitions and wrong theories and worse practices of my *Alma Mater* inflicted upon me. And not on me alone. The same may be said of my contemporaries, as I have observed them in success and failure. What was true in this respect of the college of thirty years ago is, I apprehend, at least partially true of the college of to-day; and it is true not only of Cambridge, but of other colleges, and of them quite as much as of Cambridge. They fail properly to fit their graduates for the work they have to do in the life that awaits them.

This is harsh language to apply to one's nursing mother, and it calls for an explanation. That explanation I shall now try to give. I have said that the college of thirty years ago did not fit its graduates for the work they had to do in the actual life which awaited them. Let us consider for a moment what that life has been, and then we will pass to the preparation we received for it. When the men of my time graduated, Franklin Pierce was President, the war in the Crimea was just over, and three years were yet to pass before Solferino would be fought. No united Germany and no united Italy existed. The railroad and the telegraph were in their infancy; neither nitro-glycerine nor the telephone had been discovered. The years since then have been fairly crammed with events. A new world has come into existence, and a world wholly unlike that of our fathers, — unlike it in peace and unlike it in war. It is a world of great intellectual quickening, which has extended until it now touches a vastly larger number of men, in many more countries, than it ever touched before. Not only have the nations been rudely shaken up, but they have been drawn together. Interdependent thought has been carried on, interacting agencies have been at work in widely separated countries and different tongues. The solidarity of the peo-

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ples has been developed. Old professions have lost their prominence; new professions have arisen. Science has extended its domains, and superseded authority with bewildering rapidity. The artificial barriers — national, political, social, economical, religious, intellectual — have given way in every direction, and the civilized races of the world are becoming one people, even if a discordant and quarrelsome people. We all of us live more in the present and less in the past than we did thirty years ago, — much less in the past and much more in the present than those who preceded us did fifty years ago. The world as it is may be a very bad and a very vulgar world, — insincere, democratic, disrespectful, dangerous, and altogether hopeless. I do not think it is; but with that thesis I have, here and now, nothing to do. However bad and hopeless, it is nevertheless the world in which our lot was cast, and in which we have had to live, — a bustling, active, nervous world, and one very hard to keep up with. This much all will admit; while I think I may further add, that its most marked characteristic has been an intense mental and physical activity, which, working simultaneously in many tongues, has attempted much and questioned all things.

Now as respects the college preparation we received to fit us to take part in this world's debate. As one goes on in life, especially in modern life, a few conclusions are hammered into us by the hard logic of facts. Among those conclusions, I think I may, without much fear of contradiction, enumerate such practical, common-sense and commonplace precepts as that superficiality is dangerous, as well as contemptible, in that it is apt to invite defeat; or, again, that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well; or, third, that when one is given work to do, it is well to prepare one's self for that specific work, and not to occupy one's time in acquiring information, no matter how innocent or elegant, or generally useful, which has no probable bearing on that work; or, finally, — and this I regard as the greatest of all practical precepts, — that every man

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should in life master some one thing, be it great or be it small, so that thereon he may be the highest living authority: that one thing he should know thoroughly.

How did Harvard College prepare me, and my ninety-two classmates of the year 1856, for our work in a life in which we have had these homely precepts brought close to us? In answering the question it is not altogether easy to preserve one's gravity. The college fitted us for this active, bustling, hard-hitting, many-tongued world, caring nothing for authority and little for the past, but full of its living thought and living issues, in dealing with which there was no man who did not stand in pressing and constant need of every possible preparation as respects knowledge and exactitude and thoroughness, — the poor old college prepared us to play our parts in this world by compelling us, directly and indirectly, to devote the best part of our school lives to acquiring a confessedly superficial knowledge of two dead languages.

In regard to the theory of what we call a liberal education, there is, as I understand it, not much room for difference of opinion. There are certain fundamental requirements, without a thorough mastery of which no one can pursue a specialty to advantage. Upon these common fundamentals are grafted the specialties, — the students' electives, as we call them. The man is simply mad, who in these days takes all knowledge for his province. He who professes to do so can only mean that he proposes, in so far as in him lies, to reduce superficiality to a science.

Such is the theory. Now what is the practice? Thirty years ago, as for three centuries before, Greek and Latin were the fundamentals. The grammatical study of two dead languages was the basis of all liberal education. It is still its basis. But, following the theory out, I think all will admit that, as respects the fundamentals, the college training should be compulsory and severe. It should extend through the whole course. No one ought to become a Bachelor of Arts

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until, upon these fundamentals, he had passed an examination, the scope and thoroughness of which should set at defiance what is perfectly well defined as the science of cramming. Could the graduates of my time have passed such an examination in Latin and Greek? If they could have done that, I should now see a reason in the course pursued with us. When we were graduated, we should have acquired a training, such as it was; it would have amounted to something; and, having a bearing on the future, it would have been of use in it. But it never was for a moment assumed that we could have passed any such examination. In justice to all, I must admit that no self-deception was indulged in on this point. Not only was the knowledge of our theoretical fundamentals to the last degree superficial, but nothing better was expected. The requirements spoke for themselves; and the subsequent examinations never could have deceived any one who had a proper conception of what real knowledge was.

But in pursuing Greek and Latin we had ignored our mother tongue. We were no more competent to pass a really searching examination in English literature and English composition than in the languages and literature of Greece and Rome. We were college graduates; and yet how many of us could follow out a line of sustained, close thought, expressing ourselves in clear, concise terms? The faculty of doing this should result from a mastery of well selected fundamentals. The difficulty was that the fundamentals were not well selected, and they had never been mastered. They had become a tradition. They were studied no longer as a means, but as an end, — the end being to get into college. Accordingly, thirty years ago there was no real living basis of a Harvard education. Honest, solid foundations were not laid. The superstructure, such as it was, rested upon an empty formula.

The reason of all this I could not understand then, though it is clear enough to me now. I take it to be simply this: The classic tongues were far more remote from our world than they

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had been from the world our fathers lived in. They are much more remote from the world of to-day than they were from the world of thirty years ago. The human mind, outside of the cloisters, is occupied with other and more pressing things. Especially is it occupied with a class of thoughts — scientific thoughts — which do not find their nutriment in the remote past. They are not in sympathy with it. Accordingly, the world turns more and more from the classics to those other and living sources, in which alone it finds what it seeks. Students come to college from the hearthstones of the modern world. They have been brought up in the new atmosphere. They are consequently more and more disposed to regard the dead languages as a mere requirement to college admission. This reacts upon the institution. The college does not change, — there is no conservatism I have ever met, so hard, so unreasoning, so impenetrable, as the conservatism of professional educators about their methods, — the college does not change; it only accepts the situation. The routine goes on, but superficiality is accepted as of course; and so thirty years ago, as now, a surface acquaintance with two dead languages was the chief requirement for admission to Harvard; and to acquiring it, years of school life were devoted.

Nor in my time did the mischief end here. On the contrary, it began here. As a slipshod method of training was accepted in those studies, to which the greatest prominence was given, the same method was accepted in other studies. The whole standard was lowered. Thirty years ago — I say it after a careful search through my memory — thoroughness of training in any real-life sense of the term was unknown in those branches of college education with which I came in contact. Everything was taught as Latin and Greek were taught. Even now, I do not see how I could have got solid, exhaustive teaching in the class-room, even if I had known enough to want it. A limp superficiality was all pervasive. To the best of my recollection the idea of hard thoroughness was not there. It may be there now. I hope it is.

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And here let me define my position on several points, so that I shall be misunderstood only by such as wilfully misunderstand, in order to misrepresent. With such I hold no argument. In the first place I desire to say that I am no believer in that narrow scientific and technological training which now and again we hear extolled. A practical, and too often a mere vulgar, money-making utility seems to be its natural outcome. On the contrary, the whole experience and observation of my life lead me to look with greater admiration, and an envy ever increasing, on the broadened culture which is the true end and aim of the University. On this point I cannot be too explicit; for I should be sorry indeed if anything I might utter were construed into an argument against the most liberal education. There is a considerable period in every man's life, when the best thing he can do is to let his mind soak and tan in the vats of literature. The atmosphere of a university is breathed into the student's system, — it enters by the very pores. But, just as all roads lead to Rome, so I hold there may be a modern road as well as the classic avenue to the goal of a true liberal education. I object to no man's causing his children to approach that goal by the old, the time-honored entrance. On the contrary I will admit that, for those who travel it well, it is the best entrance. But I do ask that the modern entrance should not be closed. Vested interests always look upon a claim for simple recognition as a covert attack on their very existence, and the advocates of an exclusively classic college-education are quick to interpret a desire for modern learning, as a covert attack on dead learning. I have no wish to attack it, except in its spirit of selfish exclusiveness. I do challenge the right of the classicist to longer say that by his path, and by his path only, shall the University be approached. I would not narrow the basis of liberal education; I would broaden it. No longer content with classic sources, I would have the University seek fresh inspiration at the fountains of living thought; for Goethe I hold to be the equal of Sophocles, and

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I prefer the philosophy of Montaigne to what seem to me the platitudes of Cicero.

Neither, though venturing on these comparisons, have I any light or disrespectful word to utter of the study of Latin or of Greek, much less of the classic literatures. While recognizing fully the benefit to be derived from a severe training in these mother tongues, I fully appreciate the pleasure those must have who enjoy an easy familiarity with the authors who yet live in them. No one admires — I am not prepared to admit that any one can admire — more than I the subtile, indescribable fineness, both of thought and diction, which a thorough classical education gives to the scholar. Mr. Gladstone is, as Macaulay was, a striking case in point. As much as any one I note and deplore the absence of this literary Tower-stamp in the writings and utterances of many of our own authors and public men. But its absence is not so deplorable as that display of cheap learning which made the American oration of thirty and fifty years ago a national humiliation. Even in its best form it was bedizened with classic tinsel which bespoke the vanity of the half-taught scholar. We no longer admire that sort of thing. But among men of my own generation I do both admire and envy those who I am told make it a daily rule to read a little of Homer or Thucydides, of Horace or Tacitus. I wish I could do the same; and yet I must frankly say I should not do it if I could. Life after all is limited, and I belong enough to the present to feel satisfied that I could employ that little time each day both more enjoyably and more profitably if I should devote it to keeping pace with modern thought, as it finds expression even in the ephemeral pages of the despised review. Do what he will, no man can keep pace with that wonderful modern thought; and if I must choose, — and choose I must, — I would rather learn something daily from the living who are to perish, than daily muse with the immortal dead. Yet for the purpose of my argument I do not for a moment dispute the superiority — I am

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ready to say the hopeless, the unattainable superiority — of the classic masterpieces. They are sealed books to me, as they are to at least nineteen out of twenty of the graduates of our colleges; and we can neither affirm nor deny that in them, and in them alone, are to be found the choicest thoughts of the human mind and the most perfect forms of human speech.

All that has nothing to do with the question. We are not living in any ideal world. We are living in this world of to-day; and it is the business of the college to fit men for it. Does she do it? As I have said, my own experience of thirty years ago tells me that she did not do it then. The facts being much the same, I do not see how she can do it now. It seems to me she starts from a radically wrong basis. It is, to use plain language, a basis of fetich worship, in which the real and practical is systematically sacrificed to the ideal and theoretical.

To-day, whether I want to or not, I must speak from individual experience. Indeed, I have no other ground on which to stand. I am not a scholar; I am not an educator; I am not a philosopher; but I submit that in educational matters individual, practical experience is entitled to some weight. Not one man in ten thousand can contribute anything to this discussion in the way of more profound views or deeper insight. Yet any concrete, actual experience, if it be only simply and directly told, may prove a contribution of value, and that contribution we all can bring. An average college graduate, I am here to subject the college theories to the practical test of an experience in the tussle of life. Recurring to the simile with which I began, the wrestler in the games is back at the gymnasium. If he is to talk to any good purpose he must talk of himself, and how he fared in the struggle. It is he who speaks.

I was fitted for college in the usual way. I went to the Latin School; I learned the two grammars by heart; at length I could even puzzle out the simpler classic writings with the aid

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of a lexicon, and apply more or less correctly the rules of construction. This, and the other rudiments of what we are pleased to call a liberal education, took five years of my time. I was fortunately fond of reading, and so learned English myself, and with some thoroughness. I say fortunately, for in our preparatory curriculum no place was found for English; being a modern language, it was thought not worth studying, — as our examination papers conclusively showed. We turned English into bad enough Greek, but our thoughts were expressed in even more abominable English. I then went to college, — to Harvard. I have already spoken of the standard of instruction, so far as thoroughness was concerned, then prevailing here. Presently I was graduated, and passed some years in the study of the law. Thus far, as you will see, my course was thoroughly correct. It was the course pursued by a large proportion of all graduates then, and the course pursued by more than a third of them now. Then the War of the Rebellion came, and swept me out of a lawyer's office into a cavalry saddle. Let me say, in passing, that I have always felt under deep personal obligation to the War of the Rebellion. Returning presently to civil life, and not taking kindly to my profession, I endeavored to strike out a new path, and fastened myself, not, as Mr. Emerson recommends, to a star, but to the locomotive-engine. I made for myself what might perhaps be called a specialty in connection with the development of the railroad system. I do not hesitate to say that I have been incapacitated from properly developing my specialty, by the sins of omission and commission incident to my college training. The mischief is done, and so far as I am concerned is irreparable. I am only one more sacrifice to the fetich. But I do not propose to be a silent sacrifice. I am here to-day to put the responsibility for my failure, so far as I have failed, where I think it belongs, — at the door of my preparatory and college education.

Nor has that incapacity, and the consequent failure to which

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I have referred, been a mere thing of imagination or sentiment. On the contrary, it has been not only matter-of-fact and real, but to the last degree humiliating. I have not, in following out my specialty, had at my command — nor has it been in my power, placed as I was, to acquire — the ordinary tools which an educated man must have to enable him to work to advantage on the developing problems of modern, scientific life. But on this point I feel that I can, with few words, safely make my appeal to the members of this Society.

Many of you are scientific men; others are literary men; some are professional men. I believe, from your own personal experience, you will bear me out when I say that, with a single exception, there is no modern scientific study which can be thoroughly pursued in any one living language, even with the assistance of all the dead languages that ever were spoken. The researches in the dead languages are indeed carried on through the medium of several living languages. I have admitted there is one exception to this rule. That exception is the law. Lawyers alone, I believe, join with our statesmen in caring nothing for "abroad." Except in its more elevated and theoretical branches, which rarely find their way into our courts, the law is a purely local pursuit. Those who follow it may grow gray in active practice, and yet never have occasion to consult a work in any language but their own. It is not so with medicine or theology or science or art, in any of their numerous branches, or with government, or political economy, or with any other of the whole long list. With the exception of law, I think I might safely challenge any one of you to name a single modern calling, either learned or scientific, in which a worker who is unable to read and write and speak at least German and French, does not stand at a great and always recurring disadvantage. He is without the essential tools of his trade.

The modern languages are thus the avenues to modern life and living thought. Under these circumstances, what was the position of the college towards them thirty years ago? What

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is its position to-day? It intervened, and practically said then that its graduates should not acquire those languages at that period when only they could be acquired perfectly and with ease. It occupies the same position still. It did and does this none the less effectually because indirectly. The thing came about, as it still comes about, in this way: The college fixes the requirements for admission to its course. The schools and the academies adapt themselves to those requirements. The business of those preparatory schools is to get the boys through their examinations, not as a means, but as an end. They are therefore all organized on one plan. To that plan there is no exception; nor practically can there be any exception. The requirements for admission are such that the labor of preparation occupies fully the boy's study hours. He is not overworked, perhaps, but when his tasks are done he has no more leisure than is good for play; and you cannot take a healthy boy the moment he leaves school and set him down before tutors in German and French. If you do, he will soon cease to be a healthy boy; and he will not learn German or French. Over-education is a crime against youth. But Harvard College says: "We require such and such things for admission to our course." First and most emphasized among them are Latin and Greek. The academies accordingly teach Latin and Greek; and they teach it in the way to secure admission to the college. Hence, because of this action of the college, the schools do not exist in this country in which my children can learn what my experience tells me it is all essential they should know. They cannot both be fitted for college and taught the modern languages. And when I say "taught the modern languages," I mean taught them in the world's sense of the word, and not in the college sense of it, as practised both in my time and now. And here let me not be misunderstood, and confronted with examination papers. I am talking of really knowing something. I do not want my children to get a smattering knowledge of French and of Ger-

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man, such a knowledge as was and now is given to boys of Latin and Greek; but I do want them to be taught to write and to speak those languages, as well as to read them, — in a word, so to master them that they will thereafter be tools always ready to the hand. This requires labor. It is a thing which cannot be picked up by the wayside, except in the countries where the languages are spoken. If academies in America are to instruct in this way, they must devote themselves to it. But the college requires all that they can well undertake to do. The college absolutely insists on Latin and Greek.

Latin I will not stop to contend over. That is a small matter. Not only is it a comparatively simple language, but, apart from its literature, — for which I cannot myself profess to have any great admiration, — it has its modern uses. Not only is it directly the mother tongue of all southwestern Europe, but it has by common consent been adopted in scientific nomenclature. Hence, there are reasons why the educated man should have at least an elementary knowledge of Latin. That knowledge also can be acquired with no great degree of labor. To master the language would be another matter; but in these days few think of mastering it. How many students during the last thirty years have graduated from Harvard who could read Horace and Tacitus and Juvenal, as numbers now read Goethe and Mommsen and Heine? If there have been ten, I do not believe there have been a score. This it is to acquire a language! A knowledge of its rudiments is a wholly different thing; and with a knowledge of the rudiments of Latin as a requirement for admission to college I am not here to quarrel. Not so Greek. The study of Greek, and I speak from the unmistakable result of my own individual experience in active life, as well as from that of a long-continued family experience which I shall presently give, — the study of Greek in the way it is traditionally insisted upon, as the chief requirement to entering college, is a positive educational wrong. It has already

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wrought great individual and general injury, and is now working it. It has been productive of no compensating advantage. It is a superstition.

But before going further I wish to emphasize the limitations under which I make this statement. I would not be misunderstood. I am speaking not at all of Greek really studied and lovingly learned. Of that there cannot well be two opinions. I have already said that it is the basis of the finest scholarship. I have in mind only the Greek traditionally insisted upon as the chief requirement to entering College, — the Greek learned under compulsion by nine men at least out of each ten who are graduated. It is that quarter-acquired knowledge, and that only, of which I insist that it is a superstition, and educational wrong. Nor can it ever be anything else. It is a mere penalty on going to college.

I am told that when thoroughly studied Greek becomes a language delightfully easy to learn. I do not know how this may be; but I do know that when learned as a college requirement it is most difficult, — far more difficult than Latin. Unlike Latin, also, Greek, partially acquired, has no modern uses. Not only is it a dead tongue, but it bears no immediate relation to any living speech or literature of value. Like all rich dialects, it is full of anomalies; and accordingly its grammar is the delight of grammarians, and the despair of every one else. When I was fitted for college, the study of Greek took up at least one half of the last three years devoted to active preparation. In memory it looms up now, through the long vista of years, as the one gigantic nightmare of youth, — and no more profitable than nightmares are wont to be. Other school-day tasks sink into insignificance beside it. When we entered college we had all of us the merest superficial knowledge of the language, — a knowledge measured by the ability to read at sight a portion of Xenophon, a little of Herodotus, and a book or two of the Iliad. It was just enough to enable us to meet the requirements of the examination. In

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all these respects, my inquiries lead me to conclude that what was true then is even more true now. In the vast majority of cases, this study of Greek was looked upon by parent and student as a mere college requirement; and the instructor taught it as such. It was never supposed for an instant that it would be followed up. On the contrary, if it was thought of at all, instead of rather taken as a matter of course, it was thought of very much as a similar amount of physical exercise with dumb-bells or parallel-bars might be thought of, — as a thing to be done as best it might, and there an end. As soon as possible after entering college the study was abandoned forever, and the little that had been acquired faded rapidly away from the average student's mind. I have now forgotten the Greek alphabet, and I cannot read all the Greek characters if I open my Homer. Such has been the be-all and the end-all of the tremendous labor of my schooldays.

But I now come to what in plain language I cannot but call the educational cant of this subject. I am told that I ignore the severe intellectual training I got in learning the Greek grammar, and in subsequently applying its rules; that my memory then received an education which, turned since to other matters, has proved invaluable to me; that accumulated experience shows that this training can be got equally well in no other way; that, beyond all this, even my slight contact with the Greek masterpieces has left with me a subtile but unmistakable residuum, impalpable perhaps, but still there, and very precious; that, in a word, I am what is called an educated man, which, but for my early contact with Greek, I would not be.

It was Dr. Johnson, I believe, who once said, "Let us free our minds from cant;" and all this, with not undue bluntness be it said, is unadulterated nonsense. The fact that it has been and will yet be a thousand times repeated, cannot make it anything else. In the first place, I very confidently submit, there is no more mental training in learning the Greek

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grammar by heart than in learning by heart any other equally difficult and, to a boy, unintelligible book. As a mere work of memorizing, Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" would be at least as good. In the next place, unintelligent memorizing is at best a most questionable educational method. For one, I utterly disbelieve in it. It never did me anything but harm; and learning by heart the Greek grammar did me harm, — a great deal of harm. While I was doing it, the observing and reflective powers lay dormant; indeed, they were systematically suppressed. Their exercise was resented as a sort of impertinence. We boys stood up and repeated long rules, and yet longer lists of exceptions to them, and it was drilled into us that we were not there to reason, but to rattle off something written on the blackboard of our minds. The faculties we had in common with the raven were thus cultivated at the expense of that apprehension and reason which, Shakespeare tells us, makes man like the angels and God. I infer this memory-culture is yet in vogue; for only yesterday, as I sat at the Commencement table with one of the younger and more active of the professors of the college, he told me that he had no difficulty with his students in making them commit to memory; they were well trained in that. But when he called on them to observe and infer, then his troubles began. They had never been led in such a path. It was the old, old story, — a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong. There are very few of us who were educated a generation ago who cannot now stand up and glibly recite long extracts from the Greek grammar; sorry am I to say it, but these extracts are with most of us all we have left pertaining to that language. But, as not many of us followed the stage as a calling, this power of rapidly learning a part has proved but of questionable value. It is true, the habit of correct verbal memorizing will probably enable its fortunate possessor to get off many an apt quotation at the dinner-table, and far be it from me to detract from that much longed-for accomplishment; but, after all, the college professes

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to fit its students for life rather than for its dinner-tables, and in life a happy knack at quotations is in the long run an indifferent substitute for the power of close observation, and correct inference from it. To be able to follow out a line of exact, sustained thought to a given result is invaluable. It is a weapon which all who would engage successfully in the struggle of modern life must sooner or later acquire; and they are apt to succeed just in the degree they acquire it. In my youth we were supposed to acquire it through the blundering application of rules of grammar in a language we did not understand. The training which ought to have been obtained in physics and mathematics was thus sought for long, and in vain, in Greek. That it was not found, is small cause for wonder now. And so, looking back from this standpoint of thirty years later, and thinking of the game which has now been lost or won, I silently listen to that talk about "the severe intellectual training," in which a parrot-like memorizing did its best to degrade boys to the level of learned dogs.

Finally, I come to the great impalpable-essence-and-precious-residuum theory, — the theory that a knowledge of Greek grammar, and the having puzzled through the Anabasis and three books of the Iliad, infuses into the boy's nature the imperceptible spirit of Greek literature, which will appear in the results of his subsequent work, just as manure, spread upon a field, appears in the crop which that field bears. But to produce results on a field, manure must be laboriously worked into its soil, and made a part of it; and only when it is so worked in, and does become a part of it, will it produce its result. You cannot haul manure up and down and across a field, cutting the ground into deep ruts with the wheels of your cart, while the soil just gets a smell of what is in the cart, and then expect to get a crop. Yet even that is more than we did, and are doing, with Greek. We trundle a single wheelbarrow-load of Greek up and down and across the boy's mind; and then we clasp our hands, and cant about a subtile fineness and

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impalpable but very precious residuum! All we have in fact done is to teach the boy to mistake means for ends, and to make a system of superficiality.

Nor in this matter am I speaking unadvisedly or thoughtlessly. My own experience I have given. For want of a rational training in youth I cannot do my chosen work in life thoroughly. The necessary tools are not at my command; it is too late for me to acquire them, or to learn familiarly to handle them; the mischief is done. I have also referred to my family experience. Just as the wrestler in the gymnasium, after describing how he had himself fared in the games, might, in support of his conclusions, refer to his father and grandfather, who, likewise trained in the gymnasium, had been noted athletes in their days, so I, coming here and speaking from practical experience, and practical experience alone, must cite that experience where I best can find it. I can find it best at home. So I appeal to a family experience which extends through nearly a century and a half. It is worth giving, and very much to the point.

I do not think I exceed proper limits when I say that the family of which I am a member has, for more than a hundred years, held its own with the average of Harvard graduates. Indeed, those representing it through three consecutive generations were rather looked upon as typical scholars in politics. They all studied Greek as a requirement to admission to college. In their subsequent lives they were busy men. Without being purely literary men, they wrote a great deal; indeed, the pen was rarely out of their hands. They all occupied high public position. They mixed much with the world. Now let us see what their actual experience in life was: how far did their college requirements fit them for it? Did they fit them any better than they have fitted me? I begin with John Adams.

John Adams graduated in the class of 1755,—a hundred and twenty-eight years ago. We have his own testimony on

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the practical value to him of his Greek learning, expressed in an unguarded moment, and in a rather comical way. I shall give it presently. Meanwhile, after graduation John Adams was a busy man as a school-teacher, a lawyer and a patriot, until at the age of forty-two he suddenly found himself on the Atlantic, accredited to France as the representative of the struggling American colonies. French was not a requirement in the Harvard College of the last century, even to the modest extent in which it is a requirement now. Greek was. But they did not talk Greek in the diplomatic circles of Europe then any more than they now talk it in the Harvard recitation-rooms; and in advising John Adams of his appointment, James Lovell had expressed the hope that his correspondent would not allow his "partial defect in the language" to stand in the way of his acceptance. He did not; but at forty-two, with his country's destiny on his shoulders, John Adams stoutly took his grammar and phrase-book in hand, and set himself to master the rudiments of that living tongue which was the first and most necessary tool for use in the work before him. What he afterwards went through — the anxiety, the humiliation, the nervous wear and tear, the disadvantage under which he struggled and bore up — might best be appreciated by some one who had fought for his life with one arm disabled. I shall not attempt to describe it.

But in the eighteenth century the ordinary educated man set a higher value on dead learning than even our college professors do now; and, in spite of his experience, no one thought more of it than did John Adams. So when in his closing years he founded an academy, he especially provided, bowing low before the fetich, that "a schoolmaster should be procured, learned in the Greek and Roman languages, and, if thought advisable, the Hebrew; not to make learned Hebricians, but to teach such young men as choose to learn it the Hebrew alphabet, the rudiments of the Hebrew grammar, and the use of the Hebrew grammar and lexicon, that in after life they

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may pursue the study to what extent they please." Instead of taking a step forward, the old man actually took one backwards. And he went on to develop the following happy educational theory, which if properly considered in the light of the systematic superficiality of thirty years ago, to which I have already alluded, shows how our methods had then deteriorated. What was taught was at least to be taught thoroughly; and, as I have confessed, I have forgotten the Greek letters. "I hope," he wrote, "the future masters will not think me too presumptuous, if I advise them to begin their lessons in Greek and Hebrew by compelling their pupils to write over and over again copies of the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, in all their variety of characters, until they are perfect masters of those alphabets and characters. This will be as good an exercise in chirography as any they can use, and will stamp those alphabets and characters upon their tender minds and vigorous memories so deeply that the impression will never wear out, and will enable them at any period of their future lives to study those languages to any extent with great ease."

This was fetich-worship, pure and simple. It was written in the year 1822. But practice is sometimes better than theory, and so I turn back a little to see how John Adams's practice squared with his theory. In his own case, did the stamping of those Greek characters upon his tender mind and vigorous memory enable him at a later period "to study that language to any extent with great ease"? Let us see. On the 9th of July, 1813, the hard political wrangles of their two lives being over, and in the midst of the second war with Great Britain, I find John Adams thus writing to Thomas Jefferson, — and I must confess to very much preferring John Adams in his easy letter-writing undress, to John Adams on his dead-learning stilts; he seems a wiser, a more genuine man. He is answering a letter from Jefferson, who had in the shades of Monticello been reviving his Greek: —

"Lord! Lord! what can I do with so much Greek? When I was

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of your age, young man, that is, seven or eight years ago [he was then nearly seventy-nine, and his correspondent a little over seventy], I felt a kind of pang of affection for one of the flames of my youth, and again paid my addresses to Isocrates and Dionysius Halicarnassensis, etc., etc., etc. I collected all my lexicons and grammars, and sat down to *Περὶ συνθέσεως ὀνομάτων*. In this way I amused myself for some time, but I found that if I looked a word to-day, in less than a week I had to look it again. It was to little better purpose than writing letters on a pail of water."

This certainly is not much like studying Greek "to any extent with great ease." But I have not done with John Adams yet. A year and one week later I find him again writing to Jefferson. In the interval, Jefferson seems to have read Plato, sending at last to John Adams his final impressions of that philosopher. To this letter, on the 16th of July, 1814, his correspondent replies as follows: —

"I am very glad you have seriously read Plato, and still more rejoiced to find that your reflections upon him so perfectly harmonize with mine. Some thirty years ago I took upon me the severe task of going through all his works. With the help of two Latin translations, and one English and one French translation, and comparing some of the most remarkable passages with the Greek, I labored through the tedious toil. My disappointment was very great, my astonishment was greater, and my disgust was shocking. Two things only did I learn from him. First, that Franklin's ideas of exempting husbandmen and mariners, etc., from the depredations of war were borrowed from him; and, second, that sneezing is a cure for the hiccough. Accordingly, I have cured myself and all my friends of that provoking disorder, for thirty years, with a pinch of snuff." [1]

As a sufficiently cross-examined witness on the subject of Greek literature, I think that John Adams may now quit the stand.

More fortunate than his father, John Quincy Adams passed a large part of his youth in Europe. There, in the easy

[1] John Adams's Works, vol. x. pp. 49, 102.

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way a boy does, he picked up those living languages so inestimably valuable to him in that diplomatic career which subsequently was no less useful to his country than it was honorable to himself. Presently he came home, and, acquiring his modicum of Greek, graduated at Harvard in the class of 1788. Then followed his long public life, stretching through more than half a century. I would, for the sake of my argument, give much could I correctly weigh what he owed during that public life to the living languages he had picked up in Europe, against what he owed to the requirements of Harvard College. Minister at the Hague, at Berlin, and at St. Petersburg, negotiator at Ghent, his knowledge of living tongues enabled him to initiate the diplomatic movement which restored peace to his country. At St. Petersburg he at least was not tongue-tied. Returning to America, for eight years he was the head of the State Department, and probably the single member of the Government who, without the assistance of an interpreter, could hold ready intercourse with the representatives of other lands. Meanwhile, so far as Greek was concerned, I know he never read it; and I suspect that, labor-loving as he was, he never could read it. He could with the aid of a lexicon puzzle out a phrase when it came in his way, but from original sources he knew little or nothing of Greek literature. It would have been better for him if he had also dropped his Latin. I have already said that the display of cheap learning made the American oration of fifty years ago a national humiliation; it was bedizened with classic tinsel. In this respect John Quincy Adams shared to the full in the affectation of his time. Ready, terse, quick at parry and thrust in his native tongue, speaking plainly and directly to the point, with all his resources at his immediate command, — I think I may say he never met his equal in debate. Yet when in lectures and formal orations he mounted the classic high-horse and modelled himself on Demosthenes and Cicero, he became a poor imitator. As an imitator he was as bad as

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Chatham. More could not be said. That much he owed to Harvard College, and its little Latin and less Greek.

But I must pass on to the third generation. Fortunate like his father, Charles Francis Adams spent some years of his boyhood in Europe, and in many countries of Europe; so that at six years old he could talk, as a child talks, in no less than six different tongues. Greek was not among them. Returning to America he too fitted for Harvard, and in so doing made a bad exchange; for he easily got rid forever of the German speech, and with much labor acquired in place thereof the regulation allowance of Greek. He was graduated in the class of 1825. After graduation, having more leisure than his father or grandfather, — that is, not being compelled to devote himself to an exacting profession, — he, as the phrase goes, "kept up his Greek." That is, he occupied himself daily, for an hour or so, with the Greek masterpieces, puzzling them laboriously out with the aid of grammar and lexicon. He never acquired any real familiarity with the tongue; for I well remember that when my turn at the treadmill came, and he undertook to aid me at my lessons, we were very much in the case of a boy who was nearly blind, being led by a man who could only very indistinctly see. Still he for years "kept up his Greek," and was on the examining-committee of the College. And now, looking back, I realize at what a sad cost to himself he did this; for in doing it he lost the step of his own time. Had he passed those same morning hours in keeping himself abreast with modern thought in those living tongues he had acquired in his infancy, and allowed his classics to rest undisturbed on his library shelves, he would have been a wiser, a happier, and a far more useful man. But modern thought (apart from politics), modern science, modern romance and modern poetry soon ceased to have any charm for him. Nevertheless, he did not wholly lose the more useful lessons of his infancy. For years, as I have said, he officiated on the Greek examining committee of the College; but at last the time came

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when his country needed a representative on a board of international arbitration. Then he laid his lexicon and grammar aside forever, and the almost forgotten French of his boyhood was worth more — a thousand-fold more — to him and his country than all the concentrated results of the wasted leisure hours of his maturer life.

I come now to the fourth generation, cutting deep into the second century. My father had four sons. We were all brought up on strict traditional principles, the special family experience being carefully ignored. We went to the Latin schools, and there wasted the best hours of our youth over the Greek grammar, — hours during which we might have been talking French and German, — and presently we went to Harvard. When we got there we dropped Greek, and with one voice we have all deplored the irreparable loss we sustained in being forced to devote to it that time and labor which, otherwise applied, would have produced results now invaluable. One brother, since a Professor at Harvard, whose work here was not without results, wiser than the rest, went abroad after graduation, and devoted two years to there supplying, imperfectly and with great labor, the more glaring deficiencies of his college training. Since then the post-graduate knowledge thus acquired has been to him an indispensable tool of his trade. Sharing in the modern contempt for a superficial learning, he has not wasted his time over dead languages which he could not hope thoroughly to master. Another of the four, now a Fellow of the University, has certainly made no effort to keep up his Greek. When, however, his sons came forward, a fifth generation to fit for college, looking back over his own experience as he watched them at their studies, his eyes were opened. Then in language certainly not lacking in picturesque vigor, but rather profane than either classical or sacred, he expressed to me his mature judgment. While he looked with inexpressible self-contempt on that worthless smatter of the classics which gave him the title of an educated

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man, he declared that his inability to follow modern thought in other tongues, or to meet strangers on the neutral ground of speech, had been and was to him a source of life-long regret and the keenest mortification. In obedience to the stern behest of his *Alma Mater* he then proceeded to sacrifice his children to the fetich.

My own experience I have partly given. It is unnecessary for me to repeat it. Speaking in all moderation, I will merely say that, so far as I am able to judge, the large amount of my youthful time devoted to the study of Greek, both in my school and college life, was time as nearly as possible thrown away. I suppose I did get some discipline out of that boyish martyrdom. I should have got some discipline out of an equal number of hours spent on a treadmill. But the discipline I got for the mind out of the study of Greek, so far as it was carried and in the way in which it was pursued in my case, was very much such discipline as would be acquired on the treadmill for the body. I do not think it was any higher or any more intelligent. Yet I studied Greek with patient fidelity; and there are not many modern graduates who can say, as I can, that they have, not without enjoyment, read the Iliad through in the original from its first line to its last. But I read it exactly as some German student, toiling at English, might read Shakespeare or Milton. As he slowly puzzled them out, an hundred lines in an hour, what insight would he get into the pathos, the music and the majesty of Lear or of the Paradise Lost? What insight did I get into Homer? And then they actually tell me to my face that unconsciously, through the medium of a grammar, a lexicon and Felton's Greek Reader, the subtile spirit of a dead literature was and is infused into a parcel of boys!

So much for what my *Alma Mater* gave me. In these days of repeating-rifles, she sent me and my classmates out into the strife equipped with shields and swords and javelins. We were to grapple with living questions through the medium of

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dead languages. It seems to me I have heard, somewhere else, of a child's cry for bread being answered with a stone. But on this point I do not like publicly to tell the whole of my own experience. It has been too bitter, too humiliating. Representing American educated men in the world's industrial gatherings, I have occupied a position of confessed inferiority. I have not been the equal of my peers. It was the world's Congress of to-day, and Latin and Greek were not current money there.

Such is a family and individual experience covering a century and a half. With that experience behind me, I have sons of my own coming forward. I want them to go to college, — to Harvard College; but I do not want them to go there by the path their fathers trod. It seems to me that four generations ought to suffice. Neither is my case a single one. I am, on the contrary, one of a large class in the community, very many of whom are more imbued than I with the scientific and thorough spirit of the age. As respects our children, the problem before us is a simple one, and yet one very difficult of practical solution. We want no more classical veneer. Whether on furniture or in education, we do not admire veneer. Either impart to our children the dead languages thoroughly or the living languages thoroughly; or, better yet, let them take their choice of either. This is just what the colleges do not do. On the contrary, Harvard stands directly in the way of what a century-and-a-half's experience tells me is all important.

I have already referred to the way in which this comes about. It was Polonius, I think, who suggested to his agent that he should "by indirections find directions out;" and that is what Harvard does with our youth. Economically speaking, the bounty or premium put upon Greek is so heavy that it amounts to a prohibition of other things. To fit a boy for college is now no small task. The doing so is a specialty in itself; for the standard has been raised, and the list of require-

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ments increased. Candidates for admission to the Freshman Class must know a little of a good many things. To acquire this multifarious fractional knowledge takes a great deal of time. To impart it in just the proper quantities, and in such a way that it shall all be on hand and ready for exhibition on a given day, affords the teachers of the academies, as I am given to understand, all the occupation they crave. The requirements being thus manifold, it is a case of *expressio unius, exclusio alterius*. Accordingly, one thing crowding another out, there does not exist, so far as I am able to learn, a single school in the country which will at the same time prepare my sons for college, and for what I, by long and hard experience, perfectly well know to be the life actually before them. The simple fact is that the college faculty tell me that I do not know what a man really needs to enable him to do the educated work of modern life well; and I, who for twenty years have been engaged in that work, can only reply that the members of the faculty are laboring under a serious misapprehension as to what life is. It is a something made up, not of theories, but of facts, — and of confoundedly hard facts, at that.

The situation has its comical side, and is readily suggestive of sarcasm. Unfortunately, it has its serious side also. It is not so very easy to elude the fetich. Of course, where means are ample it is possible to improvise an academy through private instruction. But the contact with his equals in the class and on the playground is the best education a boy ever gets, — better than a rudimentary knowledge of Greek, even. According to my observation, to surround children with tutors at home is simply to emasculate them. Then, again, they can be sent to Europe and to the schools there. But that way danger lies. For myself, whatever my children are not, I want them to be Americans. If they go to Europe, I must go with them; but as the people of modern Europe do not speak Greek and Latin, in which learned tongues alone I am theoreti-

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cally at home, a sojourn of some years in a foreign academic town, though as a remedy it may be effective, yet at the time of life at which those of my generation have now unhappily arrived, it partakes also of the heroic.

Such is the dilemma in which I find myself placed. Such is the common dilemma in which all those are placed who see and feel the world as I have seen and felt it. We are the modernists and a majority; but in the eyes of the classicists we are, I fear, a vulgar and contemptible majority. Yet I cannot believe that this singular condition of affairs will last a great while longer. The measure of reform seems very simple and wholly reasonable. The modernist does not ask to have German and French substituted for Greek and Latin as the basis of all college education. I know that he is usually represented as seeking this change, and of course I shall be represented as seeking it. This, however, is merely one of those wilful misrepresentations to which the more disingenuous defenders of vested interests always have recourse. So far from demanding that Greek and Latin be driven out and French and German substituted for them, we do not even ask that the modern languages be put on an equal footing with the classic. Recognizing, as every intelligent modernist must, that the command of several languages, besides that which is native to him, is essential to a liberally educated man, — recognizing this fundamental fact, those who feel as I feel would by no means desire that students should be admitted to the college who could pass their examinations in German and French, instead of Greek and Latin. We are willing — at least I am willing — to concede a preference, and a great preference, to the dead over the living, to the classic over the modern. All I would ask, would be that the preference afforded to the one should no longer, as now, amount to the practical prohibition of the other. I should not even wish for instance, that, on the present basis of real familiarity, Greek should count against French and German combined as less than three counts

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against one. This, it seems to me, should afford a sufficient bounty on Greek. In other words, the modernist asks of the college to change its requirements for admission only in this wise: Let it say to the student who presents himself, "In what languages, besides Latin and English, — those are required of all, — in what other languages — Hebrew, Greek, German, French, Spanish, or Italian — will you be examined?" If the student replies, "In Greek," so be it, — let him be examined in that alone; and if, as now, he can stumble through a few lines of Xenophon or Homer, and render some simple English sentences into questionable Greek, let that suffice. As respects languages, let him be pronounced fitted for a college course. If, however, instead of offering himself in the classic, he offers himself in the modern tongues, then, though no mercy be shown him, let him at least no longer be turned contemptuously away from the college doors; but, instead of the poor, quarter-knowledge, ancient and modern, now required, let him be permitted to pass such an examination as will show that he has so mastered two languages besides his own that he can go forward in his studies, using them as working tools. Remember that, though we are modernists, we are yet your fellow-students; and so we pray you to let us and our children sit at the common table of the *Alma Mater*, even though it be below the salt.

That an elementary knowledge of one dead language should count as equal to a thorough familiarity with two living languages ought, I submit, to be accepted as a sufficient educational bounty on the former, and brand of inferiority on the latter. The classicist should in reason ask for no more. He should not insist that his is the only, as well as the royal, road to salvation. Meanwhile the modernist would be perfectly satisfied with recognition on any terms. He most certainly does not wish to see modern languages, or indeed any other subject, taught in preparatory schools as Greek was taught in them when we were there, or as it is taught

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in them now, — I mean as a mere college requirement. Believing, as the scientific modernist does, that a little knowledge is a contemptible thing, he does not wish to see the old standard of examinations in the dead languages any longer applied to the living. On the contrary, we wish to see the standard raised; and we know perfectly well that it can be raised. If a youth wants to enter college on the least possible basis of solid acquirement, by all means let Greek, as it is, be left open for him. If, however, he takes the modern languages, let him do so with the distinct understanding that he must master those languages. After he enters the examination-room no word should be uttered except in the language in which he is there to be examined.

Consider now, for a moment, what would be the effect on the educational machinery of the country of this change in the college requirements. The modern, scientific, thorough spirit would at once assert itself. Up to this time it has, by that tradition and authority which are so powerful in things educational, been held in subjection. Remove the absolute protection which hitherto has been and now is accorded to Greek, and many a parent would at once look about for a modern, as opposed to a classical, academy. To meet the college requirements, that academy would have to be one in which no English word would be spoken in the higher recitation-rooms. Every school exercise would be conducted by American masters proficient in the foreign tongues. The scholars would have to learn languages by hearing them and talking them. The natural law of supply and demand would then assert itself. The demand is now a purely artificial one, but the supply of Greek and Latin, such as it is, comes in response to it. Once let a thorough knowledge of German and French and Spanish be as good tender at the college-door as a fractional knowledge of either of the first two of those languages and of Greek now is, and the academies would supply that thorough knowledge also. If the present academies did not supply it, other and better academies would.

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But I have heard it argued that in order to attain the ends I have in view no such radical change as that involved in dropping Greek from the list of college requirements is at all necessary. The experience of Montaigne is cited, told in Montaigne's charming language. It is then asserted that the compulsory study of Greek has not been discontinued in foreign colleges; and yet, as we all know, the students of those colleges have an ever increasing mastery of the living tongues. I do not propose to enter into this branch of the discussion. I do not profess to be informed as to what the universities of other lands have done. As I have repeatedly said, I have nothing of value to contribute to this debate except practical, individual experience. So in answer to the objections I have just stated, I hold it sufficient for my purpose to reply that we have to deal with America, and not with Germany or France or Great Britain. The educational and social conditions are not the same here as in those countries. Our home-life is different, our schools are different; wealth is otherwise distributed; the machinery for special instruction which is found there cannot be found here. However it may be in England or in Prussia, however it may hereafter be in this country, our children cannot now acquire foreign languages, living or dead, in the easy, natural way, — in the way in which Montaigne acquired them. The appliances do not exist. Consequently there is not room in one and the same preparatory school for both the modernist and the classicist. Under existing conditions the process of acquiring the languages is too slow and laborious; the one crowds out the other. In the university it is not so. The two could from the beginning there move side by side; under the elective system they do so already, during the last three years of the course. I would put no obstacle in the way of the scholar whose tastes turn to classic studies. On the contrary, I would afford him every assistance, and no longer clog and encumber his progress by tying him to a whole class-room of others whose tastes run in opposite

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directions, or in no direction at all. Indeed, it is curious to think how much the standard of classic requirements might be raised, were not the better scholars weighted down by the presence of the worse. But while welcoming the classicist, why not also welcome the modernist? Why longer say, "By this one avenue only shall the college be approached"? Why this narrow, this intolerant spirit? After all, the university is a part of the machinery of the world in which we live; and, as I have already more than once intimated, the college student does not get very far into that world, after leaving these classic shades, before he is made to realize that it is a world of facts, and very hard facts. As one of those facts, I would like to suggest that there are but two, or at most three, languages spoken on these continents in which ours is the dominant race. There is a saying that a living dog is better than a dead lion; and the Spanish tongue is what the Greek is not, — a very considerable American fact.

Here I might stop; and here, perhaps, I ought to stop. I am, however, unwilling to do so without a closing word on one other topic. For the sake of my argument, and to avoid making a false issue, I have in everything I have said, as between the classic and modern languages, fully yielded the preference to the former. I have treated a mastery of the living tongues simply as an indispensable tool of trade, or medium of speech and thought. It was a thing which the scholar, the professional man and the scientist of to-day must have, or be unequal to his work. I have made no reference to the accumulated literary wealth of the modern tongues, much less compared their masterpieces with those of Greece or Rome. Yet I would not have it supposed that in taking this view of the matter I express my full belief. On the contrary, I most shrewdly suspect that there is in what are called the educated classes, both in this country and in Europe, a very considerable amount of affectation and credulity in regard to the Greek and

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Latin masterpieces. That is jealously prized as part of the body of the classics, which if published to-day, in German or French or English, would not excite a passing notice. There are immortal poets, whose immortality, my mature judgment tells me, is wholly due to the fact that they lived two thousand years ago. Even a dead language cannot veil extreme tenuity of thought and fancy; and, as we have seen, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were in their day at a loss to account for the reputation even of Plato.

In any event, this thing I hold to be indisputable: of those who study the classic languages, not one in a hundred ever acquires that familiarity with them which enables him to judge whether a given literary composition is a masterpiece or not. Take your own case and your own language for instance. For myself, I can freely say that it has required thirty years of incessant and intelligent practice, with eye and ear and tongue and pen, to give me that ready mastery of the English language which enables me thoroughly to appreciate the more subtile beauties of the English literature. I fancy that it is in our native tongue alone, or in some tongue in which we have acquired as perfect a facility as we have in our native tongue, that we ever detect those finer shades of meaning, that happier choice of words, that more delicate flavor of style, which alone reveal the master. Many men here, for instance, who cannot speak French or German fluently, can read French and German authors more readily than any living man can read Greek, or than any, outside of a few college professors, can read Latin; yet they cannot see in the French or German masterpieces what those can see there who are to the language born. The familiarity, therefore, with the classic tongues which would enable a man to appreciate the classic literatures in any real sense of the term is a thing which cannot be generally imparted. Even if the beauties which are claimed to be there are there, they must perforce remain concealed from all, save a very few, outside of the class of professional scholars.

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But are those transcendent beauties really there? I greatly doubt. I shall never be able to judge for myself, for a mere lexicon-and-grammar acquaintance with a language I hold to be no acquaintance at all. But we can judge a little of what we do not know by what we do know, and I find it harder and harder to believe that in practical richness the Greek literature equals the German, or the Latin the French. Leaving practical richness aside, are there in the classic masterpieces any bits of literary workmanship which take precedence of what may be picked out of Shakspeare and Milton and Bunyan and Clarendon and Addison and Swift and Goldsmith and Gray and Burke and Gibbon and Shelley and Burns and Macaulay and Carlyle and Hawthorne and Thackeray and Tennyson? If there are any such transcendent bits, I can only say that our finest scholars have failed most lamentably in their attempts at rendering them into English.

For myself, I cannot but think that the species of sanctity which has now, ever since the revival of learning, hedged the classics, is destined soon to disappear. Yet it is still strong; indeed, it is about the only patent of nobility which has survived the levelling tendencies of the age. A man who at some period of his life has studied Latin and Greek is an educated man; he who has not done so is only a self-taught man. Not to have studied Latin, irrespective of any present ability to read it, is accounted a thing to be ashamed of; to be unable to speak French is merely an inconvenience. I submit that it is high time this superstition should come to an end. I do not profess to speak with authority, but I have certainly mixed somewhat with the world, its labors and its literatures, in several countries, through a third of a century; and I am free to say, that, whether viewed as a thing of use, as an accomplishment, as a source of pleasure, or as a mental training, I would rather myself be familiar with the German tongue and its literature than be equally familiar with the Greek. I would unhesitatingly make the same choice for my child. What

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I have said of German as compared with Greek, I will also say of French as compared with Latin. On this last point I have no question. Authority and superstition apart, I am indeed unable to see how an intelligent man, having any considerable acquaintance with the two literatures, can, as respects either richness or beauty, compare the Latin with the French; while as a worldly accomplishment, were it not for fetich-worship, in these days of universal travel the man would be properly regarded as out of his mind who preferred to be able to read the odes of Horace, rather than to feel at home in the accepted neutral language of all refined society. This view of the case is not yet taken by the colleges.

> "The slaves of custom and established mode,
> With pack-horse constancy we keep the road,
> Crookèd or straight, through quags or thorny dells,
> True to the jingling of our leader's bells."

And yet I am practical and of this world enough to believe, that in a utilitarian and scientific age the living will not forever be sacrificed to the dead. The worship even of the classical fetich draweth to a close; and I shall hold that I was not myself sacrificed wholly in vain, if what I have said here may contribute to so shaping the policy of Harvard that it will not much longer use its prodigious influence towards indirectly closing for its students, as it closed for me, the avenues to modern life and the fountains of living thought.

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APPENDIX.

IN preparing, now six months since, the foregoing Address, I carefully took the ground that I could speak upon the subject which I undertook to discuss, only from individual experience. I further expressed the opinion, that not one man in ten thousand could now contribute to the discussion of that subject anything in the way of more profound views or deeper insight. The numerous contributions to newspapers and magazines which have been called forth by my Address seem to justify this opinion. So far as they have given individual experience, on the one side or the other, they have been of value; but in them I have seen nothing in the way of insight or profundity of view which has seemed to me new, or of particular interest. The one man in ten thousand has not yet spoken; or, if he has spoken, his voice has not reached me. Meanwhile, I have several times seen it asserted that my evidence was of small value, and, indeed, hardly entitled to any consideration at all, inasmuch as I confessed that of Greek literature I had no knowledge worthy of the name,— merely, in fact, that of nine graduates in ten. The methods of studying the language, it has also been said, have since my school-days been so improved upon that my experience has no bearing on present conditions. And it has further been more than intimated that the Harvard of 1856 was exceptional, and that those taught in other and perhaps more favored colleges would hardly coincide in any of the opinions

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I expressed. I have, therefore, looked with much interest upon other accounts of individual post-graduate experience with Greek which have from time to time been elicited. One of these has seemed to me so very much to the point, and so directly in the line of what I have said, that I cannot forbear reproducing it in full, as cumulative evidence, now that I have occasion to bring out a new edition of my Address.

At a meeting of the Yale Alumni held at Springfield, Mass., on the 15th of October last, Mr. George S. Merriam is reported as having made the following speech. To it, in connection with my own Address, I would ask particular attention, as, if my utterances were those of one who had only studied Greek at Harvard in 1853, his are those of one who, between 1860 and 1868, has both studied and taught Greek at Yale.

"An assembly such as the present, in discussing a theme like this, may well take the character less of a debating club than of an experience meeting. I give my own experience in the matter of Greek, as being in no important respect exceptional, but, as I suppose, fairly typical. During the three or four years of study preparatory to Yale College, and the first two years and a half in college, I was obliged to spend one third of my time in the study of Greek; the other two thirds were chiefly employed in Latin and mathematics. I thus had to bestow on Greek fully one third of my working hours for six years. Two solid years, in other words, were given to that language, — spread out over the golden period for study, between the ages of fourteen and twenty. I may say that I made a fair use of my opportunities, for I ranked in Greek in the first half-dozen of my class. Two years after graduation I was appointed to a tutorship, and for a year and a half taught Demosthenes to the sophomores.

"Now, what working knowledge of Greek did I acquire through all this process? There was never a time when I could read an average half-page of prose Greek without the use of a lexicon. There was never a time when I could read so simple an author as Xenophon except slowly and toilfully. For any purpose of familiar use, of unforced literary enjoyment, Plato and Thucydides, Homer even, and far more the great tragic poets, are and always have been sealed books to me. I

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can read and enjoy Plato — in Jowett's translation. I can read a little of the Greek Testament — especially when I have the English text on the opposite page. How many of you, I wonder, who listen to me, — of you who all gave in effect two of the best years of your youth to the study of Greek, — have to-day, or have ever had, the ability to read the easiest Greek author at sight?

"For my own part, I do not for an instant consider the time I spent on Greek as wasted. I am sure I owe much to its training in close application, in mental exactitude, in nicety of thought and expression. Something I owe to even that remote contact I enjoyed with the freshness of Homer, the grandeur of Æschylus, the inspiration of Plato. I acknowledge an especial debt to the instructor who taught me to appreciate the consummate blending of passion and art in the orations of Demosthenes. Not lightly would I forego all that I gained from these sources. But I have to ask: Was all this worth the cost? And the cost is measured by the studies which were necessarily excluded by the predominance of the classics. Under our collegiate system, as it existed and still exists, the centre, nucleus, and main body of pre-collegiate and collegiate study is Latin, Greek, and mathematics. Of these things I got some smattering; but of the history of my own country my Alma Mater neither taught me nor caused me to be taught any appreciable knowledge. My years at Yale fell just at the time when American history was in the tremendous climax of the civil war; but when I was graduated, in 1864, I believe I could have passed a better examination in the history of Athens or of Rome than of my own nation. I am confident I could have given a better account of the Persian and Peloponnesian wars than of our own war of the Revolution. I could have told vastly more of the six legendary kings of Rome than of the first six governors of Plymouth or of Massachusetts Bay. I knew something about the constitution of ancient Athens, but I could not have explained the opposing theories of Jefferson and Hamilton, or defined the Wilmot Proviso. From college, again, I carried away some slight rudimentary knowledge of French, — by no means enough to read a French newspaper or to converse. Of German or of any other modern language I had no knowledge whatever.

"I do not propose, gentlemen, to inflict upon you a catalogue of the things I do not know and never did know, — nor even of my

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deficiencies in what should be the common property of all educated men; nor do I propose to hold Alma Mater responsible for all my own derelictions. But I must specify one more omission. Up to the day when I took my diploma, there had been, I may say, nothing in my education that required me to use my eyes or any of my senses or perceptions, for any purpose save to read the printed page. I had been taught no knowledge, and no means of acquiring knowledge, except from books. Of knowledge at first hand — of observation, through the senses, of the myriad activities and beauties which make up this divine world — I had learned absolutely nothing. When in the junior year we came, at last, to make some acquaintance with Nature's workings, we were totally unversed in the use of our faculties except through books; so we were introduced to Nature herself through books alone, — that is, at second hand. We were taught a little chemistry, but in such fashion that we never handled a chemical substance, or saw one save at a distance in the recitation-room. We were taught a little geology, but with no more personal acquaintance with the rocks than could be gathered from one or two afternoon strolls with an instructor. We studied astronomy for two terms without once being called on to look at the stars. Of the growth of the grass-blade and the tree, of the processes and laws of our own bodies, not a jot or a tittle was given in the preparatory or the collegiate course. Worse than all these specific defects, the whole habit of personal observation of the phenomena and processes of the material world — that material world through whose forms the spiritual world discloses itself to man — was left out of our education entirely. That omission for myself I unspeakably lament. History and literature I can to some extent pick up as I go along. I can hobble on my way, though unequipped with German or French. But I never shall get that intelligent, sympathetic, working knowledge of my physical environment for which the aptitude and instinct might have been easily gained when I was fourteen or sixteen, when I was buried in Greek paradigms, stumbling through *βουλεύω* and the uses of the subjunctive. And as I walk among the wonders of Nature, moved by their beauty, but ignorant of their interior processes, — ignorant of how the leaf germinates and ripens and falls, vaguely guessing at the story of the immemorial past written in this river valley and its mountain portals, — in my mingled wonder and ignorance I am like a child

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untaught to read wandering through a library: he admires the pictures, but the text is meaningless to him. For in my youth I was given indeed some of the keys to the riches of literature, but of *things* I never learned the alphabet. I acquired no use of my perceptions save with my eyes to read the written page, and with my ears to hear my instructor's voice.

"For my own part, even though I could read Greek like my mother-tongue, I should not consider it a due compensation for these omissions. And to-day I see the boys of the coming generation going through the same process. It is Latin, Greek, mathematics, — mathematics, Latin, Greek. No time for history; small time for French and German; no knowledge given, no aptitude trained, save through the medium ot the printed page. Must it be so forever? May we not say at least thus much: If mental discipline requires that the boy or girl study mathematics for five or six years, be it so! If discipline and knowledge of the foundations of English require six or seven years of Latin, be it so! — but at least let the line of obligatory study of the dead languages be drawn at Latin. In the name of the shortness of life, in the name of the vital, throbbing interests of our own generation, in the name of the obligation upon the educated man to 'serve the present age,' let the two solid years of youth now devoted to Greek be spent on something more closely related to living, human concerns!"

Meanwhile, the argument from individual experience has been met in a way which commands, and should command, the most respectful consideration. Other experience — alleged to be wider, more weighty, and more fully considered than mine — has been adduced on the opposite side of the question. The classicists, without any comment upon it or argument of their own, have translated and published Dr. Hofmann's Inaugural Address upon his assuming the rectorship of the University of Berlin, in October, 1880. To the translation of this Address have been appended the two opinions of the Philosophical Faculty of the Royal Frederick William University, on the admission to the University of graduates from the Prussian *Realschulen*. These opinions were given in 1869 and 1880. In both the admission to the University of scholars

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without classical training was objected to strongly and with one voice; and in the report of 1880 the opposition is based on the practical experience of ten years.

It would be useless to deny that, in any intelligent discussion, evidence such as this is entitled to great weight. By the advocates of an exclusively classic education it has been received as a final settlement of the whole debate. Nothing further ought to be asked for. The desired experiment, it has been claimed, "fortunately for us," has already been tried in Germany; and it has there been found that, even for the mathematical and physical sciences, "a regular classical course, including Greek, furnishes a better preparation than is attained by the non-classical, but most skilfully devised and ably conducted curriculum of the *Realschulen*." The argument is closed.

It must be admitted that, if the argument is not closed, the weight of evidence from observation and experience is for the time being in favor of the classical course. The advocates of change are bound to show some good reason why the evidence now adduced should not be given all the weight which is its apparent due. Had the burden of refuting it devolved upon me, I must at once admit that I should not have proved equal to the occasion. To carry on the discussion called for perfect familiarity with a leading modern language. That familiarity was indeed a necessary tool for doing the work in hand. For reasons which I need not repeat, the tool in question is not ready to my hand. I am a college graduate and a so-called educated man; but, owing to the system of my Alma Mater, I can hold no personal intercourse with the educated men of other lands. In this respect, it is admitted, my case is not exceptional. Our principal seats of learning, it has been apparent in the course of this discussion, pride themselves, rather than otherwise, on a contemptuous disregard of living languages as compared with the dead.

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Most fortunately others, wiser than I or better advised in early life, found themselves fully equipped for the work to which I was unequal. As the result of personal inquiry on the spot, they were able to take up the reports of the German authorities, and show why they neither did nor should conclude the debate which it had been my fortune to open in its present form in America. Meanwhile, in submitting the following, as it seems to me, very conclusive paper by Professor James, of the University of Pennsylvania, which I find in the *Popular Science Monthly* of January, 1884, one reflection naturally suggests itself. The debate was begun in English. The advocates of an exclusively classic course find their strongest argument in documents which they translate from the German; and I find myself at once excluded from the discussion on the very grounds upon which I based my whole arraignment of our university training. I am at least able, therefore, to adduce one more apt illustration in support of my thesis of June last.

"The discussion as to the relative merits of the classics and other subjects, as constituents of a liberal course of study, has always been marked by a great deference to authority. The assertions of eminent men, as to the advantage or disadvantage to them of the classical course which they pursued while young, always play a prominent part. The testimony of eminent educators, as to their observation of the effect that a study of the classics seemed to have on the minds and hearts of their pupils, is quoted and requoted. The tradition and usages of hundreds of years are strongly appealed to in order to show the superiority of the one system over the other.

"The present discussion in our American press has been no exception to the rule. But, in addition to the regular authorities which are quoted on all occasions, a new witness has been appealed to in this controversy, whose testimony on the question is regarded by many as decisive and final. This is the experience of the Germans, embodied in what is known as the 'Berlin Report.' It seems to be supposed that this thorough-going people have entered into the subject experimentally

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and on an extensive scale, with a view of settling it effectually. They have made, it is asserted, a fair trial of these two systems of education; and, having weighed both in the balance, they have found the modern system wanting to such a degree that they have concluded to discard it forever. There seems to be wide-spread misconception about this German experiment; and the conclusions drawn from it are so unwarrantable that a review of the main features of the case may be useful in correcting erroneous impressions.

"As is well known, there are two classes of schools in Germany which prepare boys for the university, — the *Gymnasien* (gymnasia) and the *Realschulen* (real schools). The former are the classical schools, whose curriculum consists in the main of Latin, Greek, and mathematics, and graduation from which confers the right to enter any department of the university. The real schools are institutions whose course of study embraces less Latin than the former, and no Greek, the place of the latter being represented partly by more of the modern languages and partly by natural science. The gymnasia are old schools, being the legitimate successors of the schools which dated from the revival of letters. The real schools are products of the modern spirit; and, although dating from about 1740, they did not acquire a recognized standing until late in this century. The earliest of these schools were the answer to the demand for 'practical' education in the narrowest sense of that term. It was not until 1859 that the Government of Prussia fully recognized them. In that year the schools passing under that name were classified, according to length of course, into first, second, and third class. The course of the first class was made of the same length as that of the gymnasium, — that of the other classes was shorter. From that year the friends of the real schools demanded that graduates of schools of the first class should be admitted to the universities. Their claims excited at first only a smile of derision; but so vigorously did they push matters that the Government, in 1869, was persuaded to take the first move in the case by asking the faculties of the various Prussian universities for their opinions on the subject. This called out a series of reports which were very strong against admission. It is curious that in this series of reports language was used from which we might infer that the universities had already tried the experiment; as when it is asserted in one report that the

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gymnasium students soon overtake real-school students even in natural science, — that at a time when real-school graduates were not admitted to the universities. The Government decided, however, to admit the real-school students to certain branches, which it did by the order of Dec. 7, 1870.

"Until 1871, then, the graduates of real schools were not admitted to any department of the universities in Prussia as candidates for a degree. In that year they were allowed to matriculate in the university for the study of modern languages, mathematics, and natural science. After an experience of about eight years, on the 18th of December, 1879, Professor Droysen, of the University of Berlin, moved that the faculty of that institution request the Government to reconsider its policy in regard to the admission of real-school students to the philosophical faculty. After some discussion, Professor Hübner, the dean of the faculty, was requested to ask the various professors for statements of their experience with the two classes of students. These statements were laid before the faculty; and the most important, being incorporated in the form of a report, were sent, in March, 1880, to the Government, with the petition that the latter would reconsider the whole matter, — the real object of the report being to move the Government to rescind the order of Dec. 7, 1870. These were not the first statements on the question; for the Minister of Public Instruction had already, a short time before, made inquiries of many leading professors in the various universities as to their experience in the matter since 1871. The most of them held views similar to those of the Berlin professors. The set of statements, with the petition above referred to, constitutes the 'Berlin Report,' and, on account of its formal and authoritative character, has excited world-wide attention and discussion.

"These reports are now quoted by many as a final settlement of the much-disputed question between the 'classicists' and the 'modernists,' and by many more as expressing the judgment of educated Germany, at least, on the subject. Thus, President Porter, in his article in the *Princeton Review* for September last, says: 'The question of the superiority of a classical to a modern training has of late been subjected to a practical trial on an extensive scale, by a comparison of the results of the gymnasial curriculum and that of the *Realschule*, as a preparation for a

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university course and indirectly for civil administration. In most of the German States — in Prussia pre-eminently — an attendance upon the university course, with a certificate of fidelity and a succession of satisfactory examinations, had been the essential prerequisites to many of the most desirable official positions in civil life. To admission to all the privileges of the university, an attendance upon the gymnasium with the classical curriculum was an essential prerequisite, carrying with it the consequence that to all the higher posts of civil life a course of classical study, including Greek and Latin, had till recently been a *conditio sine qua non*. The *Realschulen*, which gave a shorter and a more scientific and popular course, in which Greek was not included, and the Latin was scanty, furnish an example of a modernist education. It was very natural that this condition of things should be felt to be inequitable by the teachers and pupils of these schools, and that an earnest movement should be made to set it aside. In several of the States it was successful. In Prussia, against strong conviction to the contrary, it was allowed for a term of years by way of experiment, that the "modernists" (the *Abiturienten der Realschulen*) should enter the university and enjoy all its privileges. When this term had expired, elaborate reports were called for from the leading instructors in all the universities, of their judgment as to the proved capacity and success of the students who had attended upon their classes, from each of the two preparatory institutions with their separate curricula. With but few exceptions the reports were decidedly in favor of the classical curriculum as giving a better training even to the students of the mathematical and physical sciences.'

"We wish to call attention here to the fact that President Porter's first sentence, though evidently without any intention on his part, is misleading. He says that 'the question of the superiority of a classical to a modern training has of late been subjected to a practical trial.' Not at all; but simply the question of the relative superiority of the graduates of the German gymnasia and real schools, as they exist to-day in Germany, as indeed President Porter himself states in the next to the last sentence quoted above. This last is a very different question, indeed, from the former. The one is, so to speak, concrete; the other, abstract. The professors were not asked for their opinions as to whether a classical is better than a modern training; but is the gymna-

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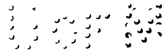
siast, as you know him from the existing schools, better fitted for your work than the real scholar who during the last eight years has attended the university?

"If it should appear upon examination that the curricula of the real schools are not what is demanded by the most thoughtful 'modernists,' that the teachers are not, as a class, equal to those in the gymnasia, that the pupils are, as a whole, inferior in natural ability, that the real schools are not fostered by the Government to the same extent as the classical schools, it will be evident to every one that the significance of the Berlin Report for the real question at issue — namely, classics at their best *versus* modern subjects at their best, on an equal footing in every respect — becomes very slight.

"As appears from what we have said above, President Porter is mistaken when he says that the graduates of the real schools were admitted to all the privileges of the university. They were only admitted to certain branches in one faculty, namely, the philosophical faculty. They were not, however, admitted for a definite number of years, as President Porter states, but for an indefinite period. The ministerial regulation admitting them says nothing whatever of any number of years for which it is valid. It holds good until supplanted by one prohibiting the admission of real-school students; and there is no sign that such a regulation will ever be made.

"To begin with, then, all this quoting of the Berlin and similar reports in favor of retaining Greek as a required study in our liberal curricula is aside from the point, since that report was made on a very different subject. The attempt to apply conclusions on concrete questions in one country to concrete questions in another is at all times a misleading and often a dangerous procedure.

"Now as to the report itself, it may fairly be objected by the real-school men that the real schools have not had a fair trial, that the period of probation has been so brief that any report made now, whether favorable or unfavorable, must be regarded as premature and at best merely provisional. The real schools of the first class are not yet twenty-five years old. The regulation admitting their graduates to partial university privileges bears date, as said above, of Dec. 7, 1870. In less than ten years they were expected to win a place by the side of their rivals, which even their bitter opponents (for the professors who



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made the reports were all graduates of the gymnasia) should acknowledge to be an equal one; and if they should not succeed in doing this, they were to be condemned as unable to fit boys properly for the university. Further, they were expected to do this with almost no aid from the Government, while their rivals were largely supported by contributions from the State. How just this complaint is, may be seen from the reports of Government aid accorded in Prussia to these two classes of schools. In the year 1869 the Government contributed 714,148 thalers out of a total expenditure of 2,851,253 thalers for gymnasia; and in 1874, 1,319,990 thalers out of a total of 4,385,940 thalers for the same purpose. In the former year the real schools of the first class cost 666,368 thalers, of which the Government contributed 15,558 thalers. In the latter year the respective sums stood 1,251,921 and 97,421 thalers. It thus appears that the Government paid in 1869 nearly forty-six times as much toward supporting gymnasia as it did toward supporting real schools, and in 1874 over thirteen times as much. In 1869 it paid over twenty-five per cent of the total expense of all gymnasia, and less than three per cent of that of the real schools; in 1874 the respective rates stood over thirty per cent and less than eight per cent. It will thus be seen that the Government has proceeded on the plan of allowing the real schools to pay their own way. The wonder is, that they have such good results to show for their work under such circumstances. It should be also considered in this connection that the proper equipment of a real school, with first-class apparatus, etc., costs much more than that of a gymnasium. Another fact should be borne in mind, that, owing to this lack of support, the number of such schools is much smaller than that of the gymnasia, and they have consequently not had so extensive a field to draw from as the latter. Another important point must be mentioned in this connection. Up to 1871 the graduates of the real school passed immediately into active life, instead of attending a higher institution of learning. The matter and methods of the school had, therefore, exclusive reference to that fact, and under the new system they must have time to modify and adapt themselves to the altered circumstances. Any practical teacher will appreciate the importance of this consideration. These are some of the objections which the defenders of the real schools have to urge against any unfavorable report made at this stage of the work. Against

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this particular series of reports, made in the manner in which they were, they have still more serious objections, which we shall notice later.

"Turning aside now to another phase of the subject, let us see whether any influences have been at work which tend to give the gymnasia a better class of material to work with. If the boys who enter the gymnasia are decidedly superior in ability to those entering the real schools, we shall have a partial explanation of the better results achieved by the former.

"The first point to be mentioned in this connection is that the traditions of Germany are classical. For decades and decades nearly every prominent man in law, medicine, theology, teaching, and (so far as nobility has not been accepted as a substitute for education) in the civil and military service of the country, has enjoyed the benefits of a classical education, if for no other reasons, simply because he was obliged to 'enjoy' them as a condition of entering these careers. We all know how easily we associate two things which we always see together, in the relation of cause and effect. And so this eminence and culture which, owing largely to the artificial pressure we have mentioned, have for years and years in Germany been found in connection with a more or less complete knowledge of Latin and Greek, have come to be associated with the latter as effect from a cause. The sign has come to be largely accepted in place of the thing signified. It cannot have escaped the observation of any reflective person who has ever lived in Germany, that there is a very wide social chasm in that country between the so-called liberally educated (*die Studirten*) and those who have not pursued such courses. There is, so to speak, an educational hierarchy, and the only path to it lies through the gymnasium. As in all hierarchies, so in this, there is an immense amount of Pharisaism, a touch-me-not and a come-not-near-with-unholy-hands kind of spirit which looks down on everything not of its type as something infinitely lower. The *Studirter* looks down, not only on the merchant or the artisan, but also upon the *Volksschullehrer* (common-school teacher) with a calm sense of superiority and a provoking self-conceit, — no matter how successful the career of the latter may have been. A small professor in a small university, of small ability and still less success, commiserates the most successful common-school teacher because he has not studied Latin and Greek; and we must add that the latter

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envies the former, taking the sign (Latin and Greek) for the thing signified (culture). No *Studirter* thinks of seriously discussing any question with a *Non-studirter*, but disposes of all difficult objections by the crushing answer that his opponent is an *ungebildeter Mensch*.

"The artisan or merchant sees that no amount of culture derived from the study of modern subjects, or in the pursuit of his calling, or from the vigorous contact with active life, can secure for him a social recognition or equality with the *Gelehrter;* the common-school teacher sees that no career of public service in his sphere, however useful or successful, can secure entrance for him into that charmed circle of the *Gelehrtenthum*, and silently resolves that his boy must have a different chance from that which he has had. Of the force which this traditional influence exerts no one can form an adequate idea who has not had the opportunity of associating intimately with the various classes of the people; for, although a similar spirit may be met in America, it is of such small influence as hardly to be discernible.

"A classical education has, then, come to be the proper thing in Germany for every aspiring man. It is a stamp of gentility, an absolute essential to high social position and influence. Every parent desires to give it to his boy, if for no other reason, simply on account of this different social position which it confers upon him. To give him this education, he must send him to the gymnasium.

"But there is another and still more powerful influence at work to secure the attendance at the classical schools. We have already corrected President Porter's statement that the graduates of the real schools are admitted to all the privileges of the university. They are not allowed to enter the law, medical, or theological faculties, and their privileges in the philosophical faculty are practically limited to the study of natural science, mathematics, and modern languages. That is to say, if a father wishes to keep open to his son, when he becomes twenty years of age, the choice of the learned professions, and the possibility of obtaining any of the higher positions of the civil service, he must put him through the gymnasium in the first place.

"Of course, under such circumstances, all professional men desire their boys to follow one of the learned professions, and send them consequently to a gymnasium. During an extensive tour in Germany last summer, the writer had the opportunity of meeting a large number

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of university and other professional men. In answer to the question which was quite regularly asked, 'What school do your boys attend?' they replied, almost without exception: 'The gymnasium, of course; we send them to the real school only when they are too stupid or too lazy to keep up in the gymnasium.' Thus the educated and intelligent classes send their boys, who, to some extent at least, have inherited their intelligence and ability, to the gymnasium. Those members of the mercantile or artisan class who have bright boys from whom they hope much, strain every nerve to support them at the school which forms the sole avenue to all Government honors and social position.

"Do we not find here the explanation we are seeking? Is not this the secret why the boys who graduate from the gymnasium are as a class superior to those who finish a real-school course? They are the brighter boys of the community; they are, as a rule, of educated blood, from homes where education and refinement prevail, and life within which is of itself an education, where they find wise and discriminating assistance in their studies, and encouragement and incitement to effort.

"But the case is not by any means fully stated. The gymnasium not only gets better material to work upon than its rival, but it has also a superior corps of teachers. The writer was told by a gentleman who was a graduate of a real school, and who had been a teacher in one for some time, but had afterward made up the Greek and Latin of a gymnasium course in order to qualify himself for teaching in a gymnasium, that no teacher of ability and enterprise would remain in a real school any longer than he was obliged to remain there. 'There is no career in that line of work,' said he, 'and only blockheads and lazy hides (*Dummköpfe und Faulpelze*) stay in it.' Of course, that was a great exaggeration; and yet it contained an element of truth, namely, that a process of selection is going on between these two schools, not only in regard to pupils, but also in regard to teachers, and the gymnasium has its pick of both.

"The reason is not far to seek. It is to be found in the higher social position which tradition assigns to the office of gymnasial teacher, and the better career which the Government opens to it. How idle, in the face of all these facts, is the assertion that the Berlin Report has settled the question between the real school and the gymnasium, or

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that it is of paramount significance in the deeper question of classical against modern training!

"To get a fair idea of the significance of this report, let one imagine the state of things which would exist in this country if the law of the land had for generations permitted no one to practise law or medicine, or enter the ministry or the civil service, or become a teacher in our higher schools and colleges, who had not first completed the classical course in an average college, and then attended a professional school for three years. Suppose that, after such a law had been enforced for a century, a proposition were made to allow such scientific schools as could spring up under those circumstances to present their students for certain subordinate places in the civil service and in the academic career. Can there be any doubt that the adherents of the classical culture would point with pride to the fact that every eminent professional man for several generations had been the graduate of a classical school, and would make that a reason, as they do now in Germany, for refusing to admit any man with a different education to the practice of those professions? Would they not dwell on the great danger to the national civilization which would arise from the fact that an element of discord would be introduced into the culture of the people by educating the young along two widely different lines? * Would not our professors complain, as does one in Berlin, that they could not make so many references to Greece and Rome in their lectures, since some of their hearers would not understand them?

"Let us suppose, further, that the above proposition should be accepted, and that after eight years a committee of the opponents of the measure should be called upon to express their opinions as to the results of the experiment. Could their report be considered as settling anything between the two opposing parties, — the defenders and opponents of classical culture? Could the statement of these witnesses, that the students who, under such conditions, came from the scientific

* This argument plays a large part in the German defence of a single school and a single course in preparation for all higher professions. "Our education," says one, "is homogeneous. Let the real school carry its point, and a hopeless and fatal element of antagonism will be introduced into our national life, and our higher scholarship, that fairest flower of our civilization, will perish from the earth!"

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schools were not fully equal to those coming from the classical schools, be regarded as forever disposing of the claims of modern culture? The answer to this question can hardly be doubtful. And yet those who quote the Berlin Report, as settling this much-vexed question, must maintain that such a report as the imaginary one above described would be satisfactory and conclusive.

"We have thus far proceeded upon the assumption that the Berlin and similar reports were prepared by unprejudiced men, after a careful and detailed examination of the records made by the graduates of these two schools, and uninfluenced by extraneous considerations. We are compelled to believe, however, after a somewhat detailed investigation, that no one of these assumptions is true.

"The men who were asked for their opinions on this subject were almost, if not absolutely, without exception graduates of the gymnasia. That lay, of course, in the nature of the case. Real-school graduates could not enter the universities until the spring of 1871. Allowing four years for the average length of time spent in the universities, the first real-school men were graduated in 1875, and in 1879 the first of these reports was prepared. As the candidates for admission to the university faculty must study one year more before entering the lowest grade of academic positions, and as promotions are very slow in Prussia, it would be a very rare thing for a graduate of 1875 to have reached a professorial chair by 1879. Those who made these reports were therefore men from rival schools, men imbued with prejudice in favor of the preparatory curriculum which they themselves had completed, men entirely under the sway of the traditional feeling in regard to the classics, and, of course, inclined to look with disfavor upon real-school men as representing a movement which questions the worth of classical culture. It is a well-known fact that there is usually a strong tendency for a man to attribute his general success in life to the particular things which he did, or left undone, and that it is an easy thing to regard an incidental as an essential. The worthy German professors are no exception to the rule. Many of them were so strongly convinced of the superiority of classical to modern training that they went out of their way to declare that a study of Latin and Greek is absolutely essential to high excellence in any department of intellectual effort!

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"All these reports, both those of 1869 and those of later years, so far as they were made by the faculties, were as a rule draughted by volunteers in the faculty; and some rabidly classical man generally offered to do the work. When his report was laid before the faculty, many voted for it, or refrained from voting against it, for the simple reason that they did not have time to offer such modifications as they would like to have seen made in the language or matter of the report. Thus, the writer was told by one professor in a university which sent in a very strong report in favor of the gymnasiasts as against the real-school graduates: 'Professor So-and-so' (mentioning his name,— one well known in Germany) 'drew up our report. He is perfectly crazy on the subject; but there was no one else to do it, and after he submitted it we did not want to do such an ungracious thing as reject a service which nobody else would undertake. I voted for his report, though I should have been glad to have a much more moderate and judicial report than the one we sent in.' It thus appears that these reports were prepared by men who were not only graduates of the gymnasium, but who were also, in some cases at least, regarded by their own friends as extremists. Add to this the fact that there were no representatives of the real schools in the reporting board who might have called attention to exaggerations or misstatements, whether intentional or unintentional, and it is pretty clear that these reports cannot be called judicial, either in their form or spirit, but partake largely of the character of advocates' pleas.

"It would be fair to suppose, however, that these men would at least examine the facts in the case as to how these real-school graduates turned out in after life, before making a report on their comparative ability. But even this supposition turns out to be an unfounded one. As is well known, there is no general system of recitation and record-keeping in German universities, such as we have in our American colleges. The professor has, therefore, as a rule, no means of judging of a student's attainments. There are no examinations except the final one for a doctor's degree. The only institution bearing a resemblance to our recitation is the *Seminar*, a voluntary organization which many students never enter, and which varies greatly in character, according to the temperament of the professor in charge or to the subject-matter discussed. Being at times a society for the training of the members in the power of independent investigation and research, it becomes often

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a mere 'quiz,' or indeed but little more than a two hours' lecture on the part of the leader. With the exception of those students who enter the *Seminar*, the professor has no means of judging of the ability or training of the university students. The only test, therefore, is the record of such students in the final university examinations for a degree, which comparatively few students ever attempt; their record in the State examinations, which nearly all try; and the final and decisive test of practical life and its demands.

"Now, it is a pretty plain fact that the professors who made these reports did not take the trouble to investigate the results of these various tests, since it was reserved for a director of a real school to collect the first reliable and comprehensive statistics on the subject, and that *after these reports were prepared.* The data were furnished by the reports of the universities as to the number of degrees granted to real-school graduates, by the reports of Government examiners as to the standing attained in the public examinations of such students, and, finally, by the reports from the present positions and sphere of labor of all real-school graduates who had taken degrees from the universities, or who had passed into the ranks of teachers without trying the university examination. We have not room to introduce the statistics here. Suffice it to say that they make a very good showing for real-school graduates. The point that interests us most in this immediate connection is, that these facts were not ascertained or considered by the university professors who reported on this subject.

"The same gentleman who collected these statistics tells a well-authenticated story of Professor Hanstein, of the University of Bonn, which very well illustrates the fairness, deliberation, and investigation which preceded and accompanied these reports. Upon receiving the notice asking for his written opinion, he remarked to his assistant: 'So we have to commit ourselves in writing again, do we? Of course, the gymnasia students are superior.' 'But, Herr Professor,' objected his assistant, 'Mr. X——, who recently took his degree in natural science, passed *summa cum laude*, and he is a real-school graduate.' 'Yes; well, he 's an exception.' 'And Herr Dr. ——, the *Privatdocent* here in Bonn, is also from a real school.' 'He 's an exception, too,' answered Hanstein. 'And a few weeks ago,' continued his assistant, 'one of our real-school students passed his teacher's examination in chemistry and

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natural history No. 1.' 'Exceptions, — all exceptions!' replied the professor. 'Yes, but, Herr Professor, there are only seven or eight of us real-school men altogether here in Bonn.' 'We? Are you a real-school graduate?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Well, you are the biggest exception of all.' And, with that, he turned and left the room. The story, which is vouched for, needs no comment.

"There is still another point to be considered. The practical object of these reports, as some professors conceived it, was to ascertain whether the faculties were in favor of excluding real-school students from the universities; and indeed the language of the request justified that view. Some voted for the reports, therefore, because they thought that the attendance at the universities is too large, and that the exclusion of real-school graduates offers a convenient means of getting rid of the surplus students. The writer visited twelve out of the twenty-one German universities, during the last semester, in order to ascertain what is doing in the various departments in which he takes special interest. Everywhere the question was asked of university professors, 'Do you think that too many are studying at the universities?' Almost uniformly the answer was returned, 'There is no doubt about it.' A few figures will make clear how rapidly of late years the number of students has increased. During the five years ending 1861, for every 100,000 inhabitants in Germany there were, on an average, thirty-two students in the universities. During the year 1881–82 there were fifty-one students for the same number of inhabitants. Of these in the former period eight were enrolled in the philosophical faculty (the only faculty to which real-school students are admitted); in the latter period, 20.7. That is, in a little more than twenty years the number of students in the philosophical faculty per 100,000 inhabitants has more than doubled. The average for the five years ending 1881 was eighteen, and the proportion is still increasing. This enormous increase in the number of students excites the gravest apprehension, and is characterized by thinking men as a sad state of affairs.

"It may seem somewhat ludicrous to us to hear of an over-production of educated men. A German professor gave the key to the riddle, in a remark to the writer, that Germany is fostering the growth of an intellectual proletary, — that is, a class of professionally educated men for

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whom there is no room in the professions, and who are too proud to go into business of any sort. This state of affairs cannot be fully appreciated without going further into detail than the limits of this article allow. Suffice it to say that the German universities are essentially professional schools. A man who enters such an institution intends to be a lawyer, a physician, a minister, teacher, professor, or member of the civil service of the country, and he receives there his professional training. It is easy to see that there can be an over-production in each and all of these fields. In this country such a state of things is easily remedied. If a man finds he has no chance to succeed as a lawyer, a year or two will turn him out a physician. If he fails in that, he can try theology, or he may go into business of some sort, or anybody can go into politics. In Germany the case is widely different. The Government demands such a long preliminary training and such intense and laborious effort in preparation, that, by the time a man finds there is no place for him in the profession he has chosen, his elasticity has gone, and there is no desire or ability to try anything else. To take up another profession he has become too old; and to go into mercantile or industrial life he is forbidden by his ideas of social position and scholarly dignity. To such a man two courses are open, — to drag out a bare existence, with many wants which his education has developed, but which he has no means of gratifying, or — to commit suicide. Many take the latter alternative; and the enormous increase in suicides during the last few years is one of the saddest and most striking phenomena of German society, high and low.

"That there is an over-production in the professional fields nearly all German thinkers agree. How can it be helped? The Government has lately called the attention of parents and teachers to the fact that the higher administrative positions in the civil service are all provided for, and that all vacancies for years to come can be filled from the present candidates. The opponents of the real schools now come forward and say: 'We can help the matter very easily. Shut out real-school graduates from the philosophical faculty, and there will be room enough for the surplus students of law and medicine to find careers.' Some professors voted for exclusion because they thought that the shutting out of real-school students would meet this rapidly growing evil of over-production in professional spheres.

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"We think enough has been advanced to prove, 1. That the Berlin Report has little bearing on the question we are discussing in this country as to the respective merits of classical and modern training, for the simple fact that it was on an altogether different point; 2. That as to the particular subject in regard to which it was prepared, it can lay no claim to be considered final, because it was made prematurely, at a time when the institution judged could, by the very nature of the case, have had no fair trial, and because it was made by prejudiced parties without sufficient investigation, and influenced by considerations which should have had nothing to do with the decision.

"As a matter of fact, the opinion seems to be quite general in Germany that the real schools are bound to go forward to new struggles and to new conquests. They have lost none of the ground which they have ever won; they are gaining new ground every day. It is a mere question of time when the medical schools will be opened to them, and some even dare hope that the law schools must yield also. They may suffer temporary reverses, but they are sure to win in the long run. One significant fact may be noted, which is beginning to tell in their favor. The men in Germany who have made the deepest and longest studies in the science of education are assuming a more favorable attitude toward the real schools.

"The writer recently visited Professor Masius, who holds a chair of Pedagogics in the University of Leipsic. He was for years the director of a gymnasium, then of a real school of the first rank, and then for years a member of the Ministry for Public Instruction in Saxony. On being asked what his position on the question of real school *versus* the gymnasium is, he replied: 'If you mean to ask me whether the real-school graduates I get in my work are the equals of the gymnasium graduates, I should say, no! If you mean whether our real schools, as they are, afford as good a liberal training as the gymnasia, I should say, no! If you mean whether a real school, as fully equipped in regard to teachers and apparatus as an ordinary gymnasium, and with a simplified course of study, could give a liberal training equal to that afforded by the gymnasium, I should reply, I do not know, as the experiment has never been tried; but I am inclined to think it could.'

"The most advanced thinkers on pedagogics are coming to agree that the subject taught has much less to do with its value as a dis-

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ciplinary and liberalizing study than the method of teaching it. Arithmetic may be so taught as to afford a much better training in language than half of our Latin and Greek teaching affords. There is a certain convertibility in the possible subjects in a curriculum with regard to liberalizing effects which is often lost sight of, but which our best thinkers on the science of education are more and more inclined to emphasize.

"It has been already remarked that it is a dangerous procedure to apply concrete conclusions in one country to concrete conditions in another. The quoting of German authority in favor of a gymnasium course in order to bolster up the classical course of an average American college is a good instance in point. The German gymnasium gives nine hours a week for five years, and eight hours a week for four years more, to the study of Latin,—that is, seventy-seven hours a week for one year. It devotes to Greek seven hours a week for four years, and six hours a week for two years more,—that is, forty hours a week for one year, or to both languages the equivalent of one hundred and seventeen hours a week for one year. It will be stating it beyond the truth to put the time devoted to Latin in our average American college up to the close of the sophomore year at five hours a week for six years, that is, thirty hours a week for one year, and to the Greek at five hours a week for five years, that is, twenty-five hours a week for one year, or to both together the equivalent of fifty-five hours a week for one year. The German gymnasium thus gives more than twice as many hours to Latin and Greek as the average American college course. Now, the leading German authorities who favor a gymnasium course have repeatedly opposed lessening the amount of time devoted to these two subjects, and have expressed their opinion to the effect that any considerable reduction in the number of hours would be equivalent to depriving the course of all its value; that is, so far from approving our classical curriculum, they unite in asserting that it is worth nothing whatever!

"A part of President Porter's argument in the article already referred to proceeds on the assumption that the average college boy acquires enough Latin and Greek to be able to read it easily. Whatever may have been true in President Porter's college days, the fact must appear evident to any one who has ever visited the sophomore classes in Greek in our American colleges, that the average boy does not acquire ability

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to translate even such an easy author as Xenophon or Homer without difficulty, — not even in Yale College; and the boy who takes up a Greek author and reads him for the pleasure that he derives from the thought is an *avis rara* indeed. It is the writer's opinion, based upon considerable investigation and comparison of notes with Greek teachers, both in America and Germany, that it is impossible for the average boy who spends the average amount of time on his Greek up to the close of his sophomore year to acquire the power of reading it easily. It is a universally admitted fact in Germany that the gymnasiast, who spends so much more time and labor than the American college boy, never acquires this power; and it is as true of the former as it is of the latter that the last day of his school-life is the last day of his Greek reading, with the exception of those following a profession which calls for a knowledge of the Greek, such as the philologists, philosophers, and clergymen.

"One other point is worthy of notice. President Porter attempts to show that the main reason for unsatisfactory results in Greek study is the bad teaching of Greek which prevailed long ago, and which he hints has almost disappeared. That the teaching of Greek is now superior to what it was a generation ago we are very ready to believe, but it can hardly be said that there is any greater agreement among teachers as to the proper object of Greek study and the advantages to be derived from it. A visit to several of our leading colleges last winter, and conversation with the professors and instructors in Greek, revealed to the writer the very greatest differences of opinion, not only among the various colleges, but even among the representatives of that study within the same college. It is evident that the teachers who believe that the most important object to be attained is the ability to read Greek at sight, and to understand it without having to translate it, will pursue a very different method from those who see in the "incidental training" in grammar, logic, philology, etc., the chief benefit from Greek study. And yet the writer recently found these two opposite views held by two men in the same department of one of our leading colleges, the one of whom had one division of the sophomore class and the other the second division. It is hardly necessary to say that, however much the second may have benefited his class, the first did not get his division to read Greek at sight.

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"The writer does not wish to be misunderstood. He is making no attack on the study of Greek. He remembers well the keen pleasure and, as he thinks, profit with which he pursued the study of Greek under an exceptionally able series of teachers, and *his viris illustrissimis summas gratias agit, semperque habebit.* But he realizes well the great importance of these educational questions, and that many of them can never be settled except by actual experiment. It is of the highest importance that all things should be fairly tried, and that held fast which is good. It is demanded in the interests of society that modern education have a fair chance by the side of classical education. That chance it has, as yet, nowhere had. Our colleges, so far as they have admitted scientific students, have allowed them to come in with a very inferior preparation. The French and German, and for that matter the English too, in most of our colleges, are mere child's play, where they are not broad and ridiculous farces, the butt of students and professors alike. Let some of our colleges inaugurate the reform: lay out a 'modern' course for admission and for college on the same general principle as the classical course, — few subjects, but long-continued and detailed study in each of them, — and insist on as thorough and vigorous work as they do in their Latin and Greek, and then, after a fair trial, compare results. The friends of 'modern' education are willing to abide by the outcome. In the mean time it will be wise for the classicists to avoid quoting reports that have nothing to do with the question, and appealing to authority which, upon investigation, turns out to be squarely on the other side of the point in dispute."

But in the discussion which has been so actively going on since June last, the German authority is not the only authority which has been appealed to with deference. The assertions of eminent Englishmen as to the advantage or disadvantage to them of the classical course which they pursued while young, have been made to play a prominent part. Yet the same discussion which is now going on in Cambridge, America, is now also going on in Cambridge, England; and it only remains to show that the weight of authority there is not all on one

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side. This was very clearly proven by Professor E. L. Youmans in the pages of the *Popular Science Monthly* for November and December last.

"The question, then, is: To what extent is Mr. Adams's view substantiated by the testimony of others, and of those who must be regarded as the highest authorities? Let us rule out the enemies of the classics — those ignorant of them or prejudiced against them — and appeal to men whose sympathies and predilections are on the other side, but who have had large opportunities of observing the results of classical study, — eminent educators, college presidents, experienced teachers, and professors of Latin and Greek, and those who have systematically and under responsibility inquired into the general working of this kind of education.

. . . .

"It may be said that the American standard of classical attainment is low, and that we must go where the system has been more faithfully tried, for the highest evidence of its advantages. Very well; and it happens that this evidence is abundant. Classical studies have been tested upon the most extensive scale, and under all the most favorable conditions. For hundreds of years they have been the staple elements of English culture. The English universities and the great public schools of England form a consolidated system devoted for centuries almost exclusively to classical teaching. The system has had the authority of tradition, it has been backed by abounding wealth, it has had the patronage of Church and State, and has been cherished by institutions of every grade, which have been independent of all disturbance from the caprice of public opinion. If 'the perfection of the Greek language,' as President Porter assumes, fits it as 'an instrument for the perpetual training of the mind of the later generations,' then the circumstances of English education have been most favorable for proving it. But what is the result? A thousand authorities may be summed up in the following sentence of a letter from Professor Blackie, of Edinburgh, to the late Dr. Hodgson. He says: 'I entirely agree with you that the present system of classical education, as a general method of training English gentlemen, is a superstition, a blunder, and a failure.' The evidence is overwhelming that the great mass of students, in the best English institutions, so far from gaining access to the sphere of

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classical thought, do not even get a decent knowledge of the bare forms of the dead languages themselves. To such an extent had classical study become itself an utter failure, and to such an extent did it stand in the way of all other studies, that it came to be widely denounced as a scandal to the nation, and the Government was called upon to interfere and put an end to it. They are very cautious in England about meddling with old and venerated things by the intervention of law, but they have a salutary habit of inquiring into them with great thoroughness upon suitable occasions. Parliamentary commissions were therefore appointed to investigate the condition of education, both in the universities and in the great public schools which prepare young men for the universities. The reports that resulted were monuments alike of searching inquiry and the total failure of the cherished classical education. The London *Times* thus summed up the report of the commissioners upon the teaching of the public schools: 'In one word, we may say that they find it to be a failure, — a failure, even if tested by those better specimens, not exceeding one third of the whole, who go up to the universities. Though a very large number of these have literally nothing to show for the results of their school-hours, from childhood to manhood, but a knowledge of Latin and Greek, with a little English and arithmetic, we have here the strongest testimony that their knowledge of the former is most inaccurate, and their knowledge of the latter contemptible.'

"And now let us observe how this thorough-going system is characterized by one who has had the best possible opportunities for observing and knowing its results. In a lecture delivered before the Royal Institution of Great Britain, by the Rev. F. W. Farrar, a distinguished author and philologist, and who was one of the masters of Harrow School, and for thirteen years a classical teacher, we have the following estimate of the present value of the system. Canon Farrar says: 'I must, then, avow my own deliberate opinion, arrived at in the teeth of the strongest possible bias and prejudice in the opposite direction, — arrived at with the fullest possible knowledge of every single argument which may be urged on the other side, — I must avow my distinct conviction that our present system of exclusively classical education, as a whole, and carried out as we do carry it out, is a deplorable failure. I say it, knowing that the words are strong words, but not without having

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considered them well; and I say it because that system has been "weighed in the balance and found wanting." It is no epigram, but a simple fact, to say that classical education neglects all the powers of some minds, and some of the powers of all minds. In the case of the few it has a value which, being partial, is unsatisfactory; in the case of the vast multitude it ends in utter and irremediable waste.'

"In speaking of the defects in teaching the dead languages, President Porter refers to the superiority in some points of English over American methods. He says: 'The culture and elevation which might come, were the power of rapid and facile reading cultivated, and the use of it, or the expression of thought and feeling appreciated, fail in great measure to be attained. These mistakes and failures are probably more conspicuous in the American colleges than in those of England or Germany, for the reason that in England composition in prose and verse compels to a certain mastery of the vocabulary, and a sense of the use of words which mere grammatical analysis can never impart.'

"Certainly, if anywhere, we should expect to find in these critical constructive exercises in 'composition in prose and verse,' which President Porter recognizes as a special excellence of the English teaching, the most successful exemplification of the benefits of classical culture. But Canon Farrar refers to this very practice in the following scathing terms as the worst failure of the system: 'To myself, trained in the system for years, and training others in it for years, — being one of those who succeeded in it, if that amount of progress which has been thought worthy of high classical honors in two universities may be called success, — influenced, therefore, by every conceivable prejudice of authority, experience, and personal vanity in its favor, I can only give my emphatic conclusion that every year the practice of it appears to me increasingly deplorable, and the theory of it every year increasingly absurd.'

"After giving some examples, this disgusted but unusually candid classical teacher thus proceeds: 'This is the sort of "kelp and brick dust" used to polish the cogs of their mental machinery! And when, for a good decade of human life, and those its most invaluable years, a boy has stumbled on this dreadful mill-round, without progressing a single step, and is plucked at his matriculation for Latin prose, we flatter ourselves, forsooth, that we have been giving him the best means for learning Latin quotations, for improving taste (or what passes for such), for acquiring

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the niceties of Greek and Latin scholarship! We resent the nickname of the "Chinese of Europe," yet our education offers the closest possible analogue to that which reigns in the Celestial Empire, and for centuries we have continued, and are continuing, a system to which (so far as I know) no other civilized nation attaches any importance, yet which leaves us to borrow our scholarship second-hand from them; which is now necessary for the very highest classical honors at the University of Cambridge alone; in which only one has a partial glimmering of success, for hundreds and hundreds who inevitably fail; and in which the few exceptional successes are so flagrantly useless that they can only be regarded at the best as a somewhat trivial and fantastic accomplishment, — an accomplishment so singularly barren of all results that it has scarcely produced a dozen original poems on which the world sets the most trifling value. While we waste years in thus perniciously fostering idle verbal imitations, and in neglecting the rich fruit of ancient learning for its bitter, useless, and unwholesome husk, — while we thus dwarf many a vigorous intellect, and disgust many a manly mind, — while a great university, neglecting in large measure the literature and the philosophy of two leading nations, contents itself with being, in the words of one of its greatest sons, "a bestower of rewards for school-boy merit," — while thousands of despairing boys thus waste their precious hours in "contracting their own views and deadening their own sensibilities" by a failure in the acquisition of the useless, — while we apply this inconceivably irrational process to Greek and Latin, and to no other language ever yet taught under the sun, — while we thus accumulate instruction without education, and feel no shame or compunction if at the end of many years we thrust our youth, in all their unwarned ignorance, through the open gate of life, — while, I say, such a system as this continues and flourishes, which most practical men have long scorned with an immeasurable contempt, do not let us consider that we have advanced a single step in reforming education, to reform which, in the words of Leibnitz, is to reform society and to reform mankind.'

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"We last month cited conclusive testimony that, *as a matter of fact*, classical studies are a general and notorious failure; we now propose to look a little into the *causes* of that failure. The partisans of the system have a ready reason for so much of it as they have not the

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assurance to deny. They admit that the dead languages may partially fail because they are poorly taught.

"It is significant that this complaint of bad classical teaching has been made for hundreds of years. The indictments of the system on this score by eminent men would fill a big book. But why, then, have not the sorely needed reforms been carried out? The subject is surely important enough, and has been prominent enough to enforce attention to it. It has occupied the scholarly talent of generations; yet, where the system has been tried longest, the best minds have still cried out against the unbroken experience of failure, notwithstanding all attempts to reform the bad practices. Two hundred years ago, the mode of studying the dead languages was sharply condemned by John Milton, who thus wrote: 'We do amiss to spend seven or eight years in scrapping together so much miserable Greek and Latin as might be learned otherwise easily and delightfully in one year.' Milton believed in reform, and had the most sanguine hope from a better system, which would do more even for dunces than the prevailing method could do for brighter minds; and he gives to his expectation the following quaint and vigorous expression: 'I doubt not that ye shall have more ado to drive our dullest and laziest youth, our stocks and stubs, from the infinite desire of such a happy nurture, than we have now to hale and drag our hopefullest and choicest wits to that asinine feast of sowthistles and brambles which is commonly set before them as the food and entertainment of their tenderest and most docible age.' And, after a couple of centuries of progress, what is the outcome? We still hear everywhere that the dead languages fail, because they are taught by obsolete and irrational methods, and it is stoutly claimed that all we need is their reformation.

"But what mystery is there about these languages that their study should prove the great chronic scandalous failure of higher education, age after age? There can be no reason in their constitution or peculiarities that should necessitate any such result. There has been a thousand times more practice in teaching them than in teaching any other languages; the work of learning them is of the same kind as that of learning other languages, and they are said, moreover, to be the most perfect forms of speech, and in that respect would seem to have advantages over other languages. There is nothing exceptional in the pro-

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cesses of their study. The meanings and relations of words have simply to be acquired, so that they can be used for the expression of thought. Dictionaries, grammars, literary models, abound, and experienced teachers superabound. And yet, with all these facilities, the study of dead languages has been the one pre-eminent and historic failure of the so-called liberal education. There is more repulsiveness in it and more hatred of it than any other kind of study, — mathematics not excepted. There have been more flogging, bullying, and bribery resorted to as incentives to classical study than to all other studies whatever. Both in England and in Germany the system has long maintained an exclusive ascendency by a barbaric discipline on the one hand, and on the other by all kinds of prizes, honors, and emoluments that could stimulate selfish ambition, and which have been jealously withheld from modern studies. With all these factitious stimulants to classical study, its failure has been so notorious that we cannot attribute it to any accidental defects in the modes of its teaching. Nor can these defects be so readily repaired; for no possible reform in the modes of studying the dead languages can alter their relations to modern thought. It is here that we find the open secret of their failure.

"Professor Cooke struck the key-note of this discussion when he remarked, in his article on 'The Greek Question,' in the last *Monthly*: 'A half-century has wholly changed the relations of human knowledge,' and 'the natural sciences have become the chief factors of our modern civilization.' This change in the relations of knowledge, by which the sciences have become the great intellectual factors of civilization, has necessarily brought with it a corresponding revolution in education. For the new knowledge did not originate by the old methods of study; it came by new exercises of the mind, as much contrasted with previous habits as the greatness of its results is contrasted with the barrenness of the traditional scholarship. The old method occupied itself mainly with the study of language; the new method passed beyond language to the study of the actual phenomena of nature. The old method has for its end lingual accomplishments; the new method, a real knowledge of the characters and relations of natural things. The old method trains the verbal memory, and the reason, so far as it is exercised in transposing thought from one form of expression to another. The new method cultivates the powers of

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observation and the faculty of reasoning upon the objects of experience so as to educate the judgment in dealing with the problems of life. The old method left uncultivated whole tracts of the mind that are of supreme importance in gaining a knowledge of the actual properties and principles of things which are fundamental in our progressive civilization; the new method begins with the systematic cultivation of these neglected mental powers. The old method has yielded to the world long ago all that it is capable of giving; the new method has already accomplished much, but it has as yet yielded but comparatively little of what it is capable of giving when it becomes organized into a perfected system of education. It is this new scientific method, based in nature, fortified in the noblest conquests of the human mind, and full of promise in its future development, that has become the rival in these days of the old system of dead-language studies. They have failed because they cannot hold their ground against the new competitor.

"The classics are constantly defended because of their boasted discipline, yet they have declined because of the growing sense of the weakness and inferiority of the mental cultivation they impart. They are accomplishments for show, rather than solid acquisitions for use. The study of words, the chief scholarly occupation, is mentally debilitating, because it leaves unexercised, or exercises but very imperfectly, the most important faculties of the mind, — those which can only be aroused to vigorous action by direct application to the facts of the phenomenal world. That classical studies fail here has been long conceded. Dr. Whewell declares that 'mere classical reading is a narrow and enfeebling education,' and Sydney Smith speaks of 'the safe and elegant imbecilities of classical culture.' A system characterized by feebleness and imbecility in its mental reactions is no preparation for dealing with the stern problems of modern life. More and more it is felt to be out of place, and is consequently neglected. No kind of culture degenerates so readily into stupid mechanical routine as that of language. Professor Halford Vaughn thus characterizes the effects upon the mind of our excessive addiction to lingual pursuits: 'There is no study that could prove more successful in producing often thorough idleness and vacancy of mind, parrot-like repetition and sing-song knowledge, to the abeyance and destruction of the intellectual powers, as well as to the loss and paralysis of the outward

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senses, than our traditional study and idolatry of language.' Very properly may it be said that our inordinate study of language is an idolatry of which the blind devotion to Greek is but the fetichistic form. The cause of the failure of the classics is, therefore, not because a thousand years of experience with them has failed to give us good methods of study, but because, in the competition with modern sciences, as Canon Farrar remarks, 'they have been weighed in the balance and found wanting.'

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"It has been well said that 'the idea of training upon a foreign language had grown up in modern times. The Greeks did not train upon Persian or Scythian; they knew no language but their own.' This is not only a fact of profound significance, but it is a crushing answer to the modern polyglot superstition. Everybody is recommended to study Greek because the language is so beautiful and perfect. Obviously the true lesson is that the Greeks made it so because they were shut up in it, and could give their whole power to its improvement. Granting the unapproachable perfection of Greek literature, and that the Greeks surpassed the world in philosophical acuteness, the invincible fact remains that they expended no effort in the study of foreign languages, and common-sense declares that it was because of it. In his defence of the wholesale study of language, in the St. Andrew's Address, Mr. Mill encountered this perplexing consideration. Having pointed out the numberless advantages of a knowledge of many languages, and then having to explain how the Greeks succeeded so remarkably without any such knowledge, he is driven to the shift of suggesting that these Greeks were a very wonderful people. He says: 'I hardly know any greater proof of the extraordinary genius of the Greeks, than that they were able to make such brilliant achievements in abstract thought, knowing as they did no language but their own.' From which we are to infer that if these clever Greeks could have had a couple of dead languages to train on, and three or four living languages to expand on, their achievements would have been simply prodigious! Another illustration of the power of fetich-worship to pervert the logical intellect!"

QUINCY, MASS., January 1, 1884.

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